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JOHN BARRYMORE  
*The* LEGEND *and the* MAN





JOHN BARRYMORE

*Phot. by Louis Houff & Co. N.Y.*



# John Barrymore



*The* LEGEND *and the* MAN

By ALMA POWER-WATERS

FOREWORD BY BROOKS ATKINSON



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*To*  
MY HUSBAND



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## FOREWORD

*by Brooks Atkinson*

ONE EVENING A QUARTER OF A CENTURY AGO I LOOKED down from a balcony seat on John Barrymore as Falder in Galsworthy's *Justice*. As the plot closed around Falder, looking down from the second balcony was a little like looking at a flame. For the lean, handsome, magnetic Barrymore was giving a burning performance in his first serious role, and I could feel the heat of it at the top of the theater.

Since I had to pay cash for theatergoing in those days, and never had much to squander, I was chiefly interested in Shaw, Galsworthy, and playwrights with an idea. Probably that is how it came about that I had never seen Barrymore in any of the light pieces he had been fooling with for many years. But in *Justice* anyone could see that he was an actor. His acting in *Peter Ibbetson* the next season confirmed the original impression. Excepting Sothorn and Marlowe, whose romantic Shakespeare had given me pleasant though vague impressions for years, Barrymore was the first actor

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to cut neat and deep into a somewhat sluggish consciousness. Other actors had more surface as I watched their playing from the balcony, but Barrymore cut through the darkness of the theater like a sharp, glittering penknife.

His great parts were still ahead of him—*Redemption*, *The Jest*, *Richard III*, and *Hamlet*. And by the time I became a working critic in New York, he had skipped to Hollywood, where, to me, he became merely a scandalous name in the newspapers. I lost interest in him. The various proposals to entice him back to the theater in the thirties left me cold. Even when he started to rehearse *My Dear Children* in 1939 I did not believe that he would bring it to New York, for the theater is a storehouse of broken promises. One learns never to believe anything until one sees it on the stage—and perhaps not then.

But by summertime there was no doubt that *My Dear Children* was running in Chicago like a six-day bicycle race. "Terribly funny," some people reported. "Horrible!" said some of the others. By winter it was definite that Barrymore was coming to New York; the threat was turning into actuality. And one night, late in January 1940, the street before the Belasco Theatre was packed with a gaping mob. Theatergoers jostled one another in the lobby and squeezed by the ticket taker as if they were going to a notorious peepshow. There was something a little horrible about the mood of that audience.

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At length the curtain went up on a silly play. After an insipid interlude, Barrymore made his entrance in a raffish fur coat—ravaged and jaunty, weary and sardonic, ill and sprightly. I was shocked by what seventeen years of revelry had done to the greatest romantic actor we have ever had. And in spite of his *savoir-faire* I imagined that he was a little terrified by the coarse voracity of the audience. But blood and genius tell, if they are genuine; and as the evening wore on there was no doubt that we had an actor before us. As soon as he felt that the audience was glad to have him back on his own flippanant terms, he began to play with wit and relish, making sport of himself, the play, and the audience, and taking full charge of everything in sight. Nothing escaped his taste for drolleries. Although he looked like a harried and battered man, he was still an actor who could dominate the theater when he wanted to, for he had the voice, the instinct of a man who knows how to use the stage, and, above all, a keen intelligence.

Despite the morbid expectations of the audience, it was soon clear that Mr. Barrymore was no brokendown hack, asking forgiveness for a prodigal existence. He was not penitent or remorseful. He was a wit in his own right and he could laugh at himself or the play without condescending. From the point of view of art it is a pity that his gifts have been so lightly squandered. But from the point of view of a human being, I think it is exhilarating to see a man with an

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ironic and candid mind taking things as they come and sharpening the realities with a wisecrack. In *My Dear Children* a superb actor in reduced artistic circumstances was capering as buoyantly as his health permitted. But the important thing was that he was a superb actor. He owned the stage he trod on.

As the wife of Mr. Barrymore's company manager for the *My Dear Children* tour, Mrs. Power-Waters has had an excellent opportunity for becoming acquainted with the personality of a wayward actor. He had to be protected as well as managed on that volatile junket; every performance became an individual problem. Following Mr. Barrymore's harum-scarum wishes, she has not ignored his follies, which are fabulous and amusing. Neither has she assumed a moral point of view. Given an entertaining subject she has written an entertaining book. But what I like about it most is the fact that she has not forgotten that Mr. Barrymore is an actor who once dominated the theater and could dominate it again if he could put his mind on it and wanted to.

JOHN BARRYMORE

*The* LEGEND *and the* MAN



## CHAPTER ONE

### *ANTECEDENTS AND BOYHOOD*

A SHAFT OF AFTERNOON CALIFORNIAN SUNSHINE ILLUMINED the figure of a man sitting on the edge of an exquisitely hand-painted bed. Except for two battered kitchen chairs (occupied at the moment by two friends), the room was completely bare. No carpet. No curtains. Nothing. The lord of this empty domain was clothed in a shabby dressing gown. A cigarette burned between his first and second fingers. His feet were encased in a pair of well-worn slippers. His face was wreathed in a broad smile, which suddenly grew into a guffaw, and the two friends joined in the merriment. The walls echoed with the laughter of men who are oblivious to the necessity of comfort—other than something to sit on, and the sublime kin of friendship.

The man in the dressing gown is blessed or cursed with one of the most famous faces in the world. His countenance has been reflected simultaneously from movie screens half-way around the globe and his sensitive profile reproduced in



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a thousand magazines. Records of his magnificent acting are kept in the history of dramatic art. He has been hailed as the greatest Hamlet since Booth and—to name an achievement perhaps even more remarkable—as the only man who ever made Garbo self-conscious. He is known as one who loves to mock the acting profession, and yet he has done more to enhance the poetry of Shakespeare than any other actor of his generation.

The darling of society, feted and fussed over by the intelligentsia, he is frequently the loneliest of men. He has been on easy terms with royalty, and yet he is never happier than when exchanging stories with his stagehands or cracking jokes with colored porters. His absolute disregard for money has been the despair of his advisers. His harassed lawyers have many times given up their client on account of the complexity of his personal, professional, and financial affairs. He speaks of the joys of a peaceful fireside, and has lived his entire life on the edge of an emotional precipice of one sort or another. He says he has no religion, but he keeps a votive lamp burning before a statue of the Blessed Virgin in his house.

His personality is warm and human, but his dislike of a person can be scathing. Here is a great actor who did not want to act, but to paint pictures; an idol of the people who on that very account hates flattery; an artist who appraises his own merits as nil. Prone to moods of darkest depression,

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which sometimes shift suddenly to flights of optimism, his incorrigible humor has helped him to reach middle age without being bored.

One might ask, "Why is this man, who has earned millions of dollars, sitting in a comfortless room?" Or, upon going through his beautiful house, devoid of furniture save for a bed and two chairs, and noticing the magnificent chandelier still hanging from the ceiling in the drawing room, one might be prompted again to ask, "Why?" The chandelier remains, a silent symbol of the one thing that no wife can have removed from what used to be known as the Barrymore home.

If, by chance, you were to walk down North Ninth Street in Philadelphia some years ago, you might have seen a row of small brick houses wedged cozily together, looking rather as if they had spent a happy night out and were leaning against each other for support. There would be nothing particularly attractive about this street, with its row of neat white steps. At number 119 (John Drew's house), the three Barrymore children first saw the light of day. The top floors of the house still remain, but the ground floor has been turned into a dry-cleaning store.

The father, Herbert Blythe, was born at Fort Agra, India, during the Indian mutiny, the son of a British army officer. The mysticism of that country seemed to have clung to him all through his life. His mother died when he was a baby,

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and the story goes that the child, having respect for India's sacred cows, was fed on goat's milk. This, Blythe used to say, accounted for many proclivities of his children. He was brought to England in order to prepare for college. This was probably the period in his life when he worked hardest, for he managed to graduate with high marks from Cambridge. He then coached for the Indian Civil Service under Walter Wren, but abandoned the idea of India and studied law.

It was not long before he found that he was much more interested in boxing, and soon became lightweight champion of England. Here the name Barrymore (his mother's maiden name) first came into prominence, for whenever Herbert Blythe entered the ring, it was as Maurice Barrymore.

Maurice was a charming man: unpredictable, erratic, full of fun, and proud of his wit, which was at all times petal blown, not cynical or sarcastic. He came to the United States in 1875 and played in Boston that same year as Captain Molyneux in *The Shaugraun*, a role well fitted to his splendid physique and personal magnetism. He was talented as well as handsome, and it was not long before he made his presence felt on the boards of the Broadway rialto.

In December 1875 he met Georgiana Drew, the beautiful daughter of Mrs. John Drew of Philadelphia, and fell in love with her. They were married just a year later. Maurice soon discovered that he had wed a lady who could also crack

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a good joke and who was his master in wit. Georgiana Drew could always top a Blythe gag.

This marriage united two of the greatest acting families in America, and their three children, Lionel, Ethel, and John, started a new dynasty of the stage.

Six years after Maurice made his American debut, while he was traveling in Texas with *Diplomacy*, one of the members of the company was shot fatally in a railroad station waiting room by a notorious Texan desperado—a bit of dramatic criticism rather too direct, even for the West of those days. Barrymore, who tried to interfere, was badly wounded in the arm. He returned to Philadelphia, suffering much pain on the long journey from Texas, and was greeted at the station by Mrs. Drew, who nursed him for several weeks at her house, as Georgiana was on tour in another part of the country. Maurice lost the use of his arm for a long time after the bullet had been extracted. Family history records that Lionel cut his first tooth on this bullet which the self-styled cowboy critic had fired at his father.

Maurice played with Joseph Jefferson in *The Rivals*, and later acted all the leading roles with Madame Modjeska. Not only was he a very good actor, but also a playwright. *Nadjesda*, one of his plays, a turgid Slav melodrama, reached Broadway under Modjeska's banner. In connection with this play, there was a lawsuit which lasted six years between

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Maurice Barrymore and Sardou. Maurice accused Sardou of redressing his play, *Nadjesda*, calling it *La Tosca*, and passing it off as original. Sarah Bernhardt made one of her greatest successes in this play. Maurice said, "Any man who takes your cane out of your house and builds an umbrella out of it is still a thief." The case, however, was never settled.

But it was as an actor that Maurice shone. Perhaps it was a pity that acting came so easily to him, for he was unspeakably lazy and worked only when he must. He had no steadfast ambitions, and yet was the personification of extravagant versatility and talent, along with forgivable irresponsibility. This very description could be written of John at the same age as his father.

The parts Maurice was most famous for were Orlando in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and Captain Swift, the title role of Haddon Chambers' play of the same name. Few actors in his day had a larger following than Maurice Barrymore, nor were there many actresses more capable and charming than Georgiana Drew. Small wonder is it then that John should inherit the personal magnetism that is at least half the success of an actor.

Lionel, Ethel, and John were brought up to hear the theater discussed morning, noon, and night.

One could imagine the conversations that would take

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place at the table over a dish of tea and its accompanying homemade cookies.

"Do you think Modjeska is as powerful as Sarah Bernhardt in modern emotional drama?"

"Do you agree with the critics that Salvini is the greatest actor since Garrick?"

Or, "Did you hear that Fanny Janauschek has had to sell her lovely jewels? . . . The ones given her by the Indian prince?"

"Yes, he must have thought her lovely in Brünnhilde to have spent a fortune on her."

Perhaps they would laugh at the time when their scene went completely dark, because a belt was being changed at the power house.

While these discussions were going on inside the house, the voice of the catfish woman would rend the air outside, or maybe the man who peddled sulphur matches and sand would be heard calling his wares. The housewives in North Ninth Street were always eager to buy from him sand for scrubbing. There was great competition as to who could keep her three white steps, which led up to every front door, the cleanest.

At other times the Barrymore children remember their mother putting Maurice through his paces with Shakespeare. Their father was the only member of the family who had to

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study day and night to get Shakespeare into his head. Georgiana could commit things to memory in no time at all, and John Drew, the children's uncle, once learned a leading part in one night. Such was the atmosphere in which John Barrymore's childhood was spent.

Maurice's interesting life may be closely followed by going through the many press clippings kept at libraries, the Players Club, and elsewhere, but the story of one extraordinary hobby is of interest to those following John's career, for the latter has inherited the love of animals that his father had.

One can be very fond of animals and not have the fact referred to as a hobby. But Maurice not only liked them; he insisted upon traveling with them when he was on the road. Somehow he could not understand why he was so unpopular at hotels. His pets included skunks, birds, Japanese poodles, and Eskimo dogs.

These animals traveled in the baggage car, until the fights between them got to be so terrific that Mr. Frohman told Barry (as Maurice was called) that he must send them back home. It was as if he were parting with his life's blood when he shipped them to a farm on Staten Island.

Some years later a friend of Barry's met him, and was shocked at his appearance. He was unshaven, miserable, hollow-eyed, his clothes were disheveled, a picture of dejectedness. Some wretch had burned his farm, and only one dog, "Belle of Clyde," his valuable Clydesdale terrier, was

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saved. As a poor consolation for the death of his beloved animals, he purchased a bear from some old gypsy and spent most of his time away in the wilds training it to roll over at his command.

John has this same great love and understanding of animals, although it was not until he had reached his late thirties, and was settled in Hollywood, that he was able to indulge in his desire to own a menagerie, which proved to be bigger and better than his father's.

John's other grandfather, Judge Blythe of Madras, is not mentioned in the Barrymore archives, and neither is his Uncle Henry Wace, Dean of Canterbury Cathedral. This seems rather strange until John tells us the reason.

His uncle used to debate against Huxley, and probably many a time Huxley got the better of him. Yet Henry Wace was a brilliant man, and would undoubtedly have been ordained Archbishop of Canterbury had he lived long enough. So, with a grandfather a judge and a dean for an uncle, John has refrained from connecting the family name with anything so shocking as the stage, just as Maurice used to protect it from the prize ring.

Needless to say, the Barrymores had to struggle as has every famous theatrical family from time immemorial. Since Maurice and Georgiana had to be on the road most of the time, the children were left in their grandmother's care, and were taught to uphold the Barrymore tradition as if it were



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almost a sacred mission. Lionel was the firstborn, then two years later came Ethel, who has the same proud, determined features that her mother had. John is the baby of the family. All three are clever, and all three erratic. Each one in later years came to have the same love of the theater and of the nighttime, and an almost fanatic dislike of the day. Someone once wittily named the children "Owlingales," and to this day none of them can be induced to go to bed so long as there is anything interesting around.

When they were small, they had a nurse called Hildergarde. No one ever knew her last name. She would push the perambulator containing John up and down the Philadelphia streets, with Lionel (most often in a sailor suit) on one side of her, and Ethel, wearing a high-necked, long-sleeved dress and large hat, hanging onto the other side of the pram.

Uncle John Drew's openings at Philadelphia were always great occasions for the Barrymore children. A week ahead, Aunt Josephine (Mrs. John Drew) would come to look over their wardrobe to see what could be renovated, and if new things were needed. She once bought Ethel a Milan straw hat, for which she paid five dollars, a large sum in those days, but that hat reappeared for many seasons after, camouflaged with poppies or daisies or ruches of ribbon.

Ethel and Bijou (Mrs. John Drew's daughter) were pupils at the Convent of Notre Dame on Rittenhouse Square

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in Philadelphia. Ethel made rapid progress in her music, playing Chopin's waltzes to perfection. She had decided then to become a musician, and at an early age played in a symphony orchestra.

John was expelled from more schools than most boys ever see. He also attended, as a child, the Convent of Notre Dame. It was, of course, an academy for girls, but it had an annex for small boys.

John added to the gaiety of that place for two years. Ethel's only crime was playing "Old Maid" during school hours.

One day John repaid an old score with one of the pupils by hitting him on the ear with a hard-boiled egg. Sister Vincent, whom John recalls as one of the finest women he ever knew, promptly admonished him.

"One day you might become an actor yourself, and an egg may come back to you."

In recalling this incident, John said, "I was punished by remaining the whole day in an empty schoolroom with a big book. It was Dante's *Inferno*. At first I was bored and then resentful, but upon seeing the beautiful illustrations by Doré my interest was aroused, and a new urge was born within me. I wanted to be an artist."

Years later, John paid a visit to his first school, and upon seeing Sister Vincent again threw his arms around her and gave her a resounding kiss. The poor nun was too astonished

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to speak, and ran away to say her rosary. "But she was pleased, just the same," said John. "I could tell."

His father sent him at the age of thirteen to Georgetown Jesuit College, Washington, D. C., where he found that he was younger and much smaller than any of the other students.

On the day of his arrival, a priest took him through the buildings. The gymnasium appealed to him especially. He asked if he might try the horizontal bars.

"Why, certainly you may," said the good father, pleased that the boy was making himself at home so readily.

John jumped up and swung himself. As he turned over, there fell out of his pocket a dime novel and a half-pint bottle of whisky.

From then on the school knew what to expect. On another day, a few months later, he went to Harvey's Old Oyster House. A couple of the boys were with him, and he drank a great deal. After he returned to the dormitory that night, he continued to amuse his roommates by giving imitations of actors in convivial mood, when one of the Jesuit fathers entered.

"I suppose you know you are going fast to perdition," the father said quietly.

"No, but I'm sure I'm going back to Philadelphia."

Barrymore was not sent back, but later another incident happened which seems to have been a sort of turning point

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or crack in the whole convention of his young life. Things that happen in boyhood sometimes have a strange and complex effect upon later years. It was George Washington's birthday, and John was seen leaving college with a group of students bent on visiting a house of ill repute. He was entirely innocent, but on account of his being an actor's son, and of his frequent boast that "he knew all about life," he was blamed for the doings of the other boys.

He was immediately expelled and sent packing back to Philadelphia. When he reached home, Maurice was sitting by the fire in his living room, half asleep. John told the reason of his sudden return. His father, far from scolding him, seemed amused.

"Just what were you doing at such a place, my son?" he inquired.

"Nothing, father, absolutely nothing."

There was quite a pause, for the significance of this statement had not struck home. Then Maurice suddenly woke up.

"What?" he shouted, hardly believing his own ears. "Then what the devil was the matter with you? Aren't you a Barrymore?"

This incident may have momentarily been treated as a joke, but John declares that the unjust accusation and expulsion from school did something to him. His grandmother, who was now bringing up the three children, had the greatest difficulty in reconciling him to religion. The lad

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who once was, within reasonable limits, an exemplary altar boy swore he would not enter a church again. It was a long time before he did.

One can well imagine that the temperaments of John's parents often clashed. Georgiana, blonde, devout Roman Catholic and the gentlest of mothers; Maurice, dark as night, a regular Bohemian, always in the limelight, impractical and impious.

There is an oft-told story of his father returning to the house one Sunday morning, after having spent a happy night with the boys of the village. Upon meeting his wife with his three children, Ethel, Lionel, and John, at the front door, dressed in their best, Maurice inquired, "Where are you going, darling?"

"I am going to church," was the reply. "But you can go to hell."

This same piece of repartee was to be quoted in later years when John's first wife was seeking separation from him. She cited this caustic remark, as evidence to prove that she had married into a crazy family. "After all," she said, "what kind of child could such parents have?"

Another characteristic of John's father was that he would often disappear for days or even weeks and return home quite coolly, as if nothing unusual had happened. He also found great satisfaction in taking sly digs at his brother-in-law, John Drew the younger.

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One evening, returning quite casually from one of his weekly disappearances, he chanced to poke his head into the children's bedroom just as they were saying their prayers. "God bless Mother, and God bless Father—"

"—and God make Uncle John Drew a better actor," interpolated Maurice, before the door was closed upon him somewhat energetically.

Once, when the Barrymores were living on Ninetieth Street in New York, they were so badly off that Georgiana hadn't enough money to pay the grocery bills. However, Maurice was expected home from a western tour. The children were all excited over their father's return, since they saw very little of him at any time. Imagine the delight of the youngsters when father turned up with a lovely fat bear cub, which he had brought all the way from Kansas City. But it was a different story when their mother found out that Maurice had spent all the money he had on the bear and hadn't a cent for the groceries.

John says that he made his first appearance on any stage at the age of ten. There being no records of him as a child actor, he was asked the reason.

"It was at North Long Branch in New Jersey. Several members of the family were living together in one house. Ethel suggested to my brother that we hire a hall and be producers. He jumped at the idea. So we put on a play and charged admission, two cents. We did a dead serious per-

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formance of *Camille*, which turned out to be the biggest burlesque you could imagine. We had an enthusiastic audience. Ethel was, of course, Camille, Lionel was Armand, and I, being the bad boy of the village, played the villain. All went well until the time came for dividing the profits. Ethel and Lionel were in cahoots with each other not to give me any, but to pay me a small amount as a subsidiary actor. Indignantly I stormed in to my grandmother.

" 'Ethel and Lionel are trying to cheat me,' I shouted frantically. 'Since you are manager of the Arch Street Theatre, you can surely manage ours.' "

" 'I am surprised at your being so unbusinesslike. Why didn't you have a proper understanding with them before you started?' "

"I grinned. 'Well, Grandma, as a matter of fact, I made pals with Mr. Hammerslaugh in the box-office, and he promised me a percentage. Of course, Ethel and Lionel didn't know anything about that.' "

"My grandmother was so delighted with my first bit of financial perspicuity that she promised me she would double whatever my share worked out to be.

" 'You'll never starve,' she laughed. 'You've learned already to keep in with the right people.' "

"I made exactly three times what the others did, and I never gave them one cent," he concluded.

The face of New York was beginning to take on new

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contours about this time. Hammerstein had opened his immense Olympia Theater wherein ten thousand people could be seated comfortably, and the thoroughfare on Broadway between Forty-second Street and the Fifties was becoming Times Square.

Things had not been going well for Maurice, when he was offered a good contract to go in vaudeville. Everyone thought he was crazy even to consider it for one moment, but five hundred dollars a week was very tempting, especially when there were three growing children to be fed and clothed. He presented a serious one-act comedy entitled *The Man of the World*, in which John appeared.

On the opening night, Maurice was late arriving at the theater as usual—a favorite Barrymore characteristic. He always rushed in, and barely had time to dress. This particular evening, John watched his father make up; he had to wear a heavy mustache. John copied his make-up exactly, even to the mustache. Maurice did not see his son until he made his entrance. The startling effect of his appearance brought out the Barrymore wit, and Maurice made the biggest hit of his life.

John does not recollect the exact words the father used upon seeing this child of thirteen with a heavy handlebar mustache, but he remembers it was so funny that the house roared for a full minute.

Ethel, speaking of her mother, says that she was always



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radiant, always happy—her banter flashed like sun on bright steel. Georgie Drew used to put Ethel in a basket in the dressing room to sleep, while she herself improved the shining hour by bringing home the bacon.

When Maurice and Georgie took the children once to England to visit the Blythes, who were strait-laced to the last degree, their language so shocked the family that only the Drew wit saved the situation. Georgiana turned to Maurice, and said, "I'm always telling you not to let those children into the coachman's quarters."

John's great-grandparents were Eliza and Thomas Lane, well-known actors of their day, and Grandmother Drew was a great actress in England. When she was eight years old she played five characters in a sketch called *Twelve Precisely*. It is not strange that the current Barrymores, drawing upon generations of charm and wit, so nonchalantly carry on the great tradition.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *ART FOR ART'S SAKE—FIRST FAILURE*

JOHN WAS GIVEN UP, THEATRICALY SPEAKING, BY HIS father, and was sent to England to finish his education. It was at King's College, Wimbledon, that his prowess as a football player won him a place on the team. Spectators and players decided that he was a tiger in human form, and he was promptly installed as goalkeeper. As for scholarly progress, he made none. He would spend most of his time drawing caricatures of the professors in the margins of his books.

James McNeill Whistler, the great artist (in whose house Barrymore was to live later on, in London), also used to draw caricatures—not in his books, but in the margins of his engravings. They once almost cost Whistler his job, for he was sent out by his firm to do several engravings of a certain island on the Pacific. He fulfilled his contract, but he had done several caricatures of the natives in the margin of his drawing, which came out in the engravings. His firm

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was furious and threatened to fire him. Those same small sketches are now priceless. John's may be in time to come, if not for their great art at least for their sentimental value.

At fourteen, he used to stay often with the Ben Websters in London. Even at that age he was able to use his charm to good advantage, and had a way of wheedling money out of people. As soon as he had received a shilling from someone, he would assume a puckish attitude, and say, "I must e'en fly," not returning until it was all spent. On one occasion, John begged Mrs. Webster (Dame May Whitty) for two pounds because he had to go to Plymouth to meet Ethel. He received the money, and disappeared for three days, returning quite calmly and with no explanation. (Shades of his father!)

He eventually went as a student to London University and took a course of English lectures under Professor Kerr. But John did not live up to the English idea of a gentleman scholar. In fact, the pinnacle of attainment during this period was the saving of a friend's wife, who had fallen into two feet of water at a little town on the Thames called Cookham. The friend's name was Sam Sothern, son of E. A. Sothern, the Shakespearean actor.

From that time on, John was the best-dressed boy in town. For Sam, in gratitude for the rescue of his wife, gave him carte blanche to use any of his clothes. At that time, Barrymore had only one suit to his name, and it was threadbare.

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John tells of a certain staid and pompous professor at the university, who never lost an opportunity to warn his students of the shocking effects of drink. No matter on what subject he happened to be lecturing, he would always contrive to weave in some strong advice about liquor.

Some years later, when John was thrilling London with his famous interpretation of Hamlet, he decided to look up his old friend.

"I was ushered very courteously into the professor's den—nothing had changed. Everything was in the same place; the professor himself did not look one whit older.

" 'This is one of the happiest moments of my life,' he said, stretching his hand out in a delightful welcome, and bringing forward a comfortable chair for me. It was the first time I had seen him completely natural. We talked over old times. He was eager to hear of my stage experiences, and I, to find out how the boys were and if he kept in touch with any of them. As time wore on, the old boy got more and more human. Presently, he went to a small cupboard and, with a benignant smile at me, opened it and took out a bottle of Scotch.

" 'On this great occasion, I shall break my lifelong rule, and have a drink with you,' he beamed.

"Well," said John, laughing at the recollection, "by the time dawn broke through the old Venetian blind, we were both very mellow.

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"Suddenly I realized that he would have to prepare an early morning lecture, and I left with an uneasy conscience. I heard later that the professor had delivered the finest discourse of his life on the value of rare Falernian wine to the orations of Cicero."

John in those days wanted to take up art; in fact, he had not even thought of acting. He became a student at the Slade School of Art in London. He lived with the Waces (his father's sister had married Richard Wace). Jack Barrymore remembers his pride at King's College one day, reading in a history book that "the first man over the battlements of Lucknow was a tall young subaltern, Richard Wace." Mrs. Wace used to reply when inquiries were made of her young nephew Jack, "Oh, he's quite happy, fluctuating between the deanery and the beanery."

While John was attending or not attending the Slade lectures, Ethel came to London. She was tremendously successful, and very popular, a beautiful girl, then only in her teens, but with the charm and poise of a woman of the world. She was the special protégée of the Duchess of Sutherland. An idea of Ethel's popularity may be gained from the fact that she was rumored to be engaged to Laurence Irving, the Duke of Manchester, Sir Robert Peel, Anthony Hope, and Prince Ranjitsinhji, all at the same time.

Ethel always insisted upon taking her young brother with her to parties, but he was scared stiff. Whenever he found

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himself at a social gathering, he would hide in a corner and hope for the best. At one of these events he saw a pleasant-looking man carrying an ice to a lady; undoubtedly he was a waiter. Ah! here was someone he could become chummy with. They got on beautifully together until he found out that the waiter was Henry James, who strangely enough was also socially inarticulate.

When John went back to the United States, he enrolled at the Art Students' League, but remained for only one lesson. The only thing about this that seemed to surprise his father, who, incidentally, had paid for a full year's tuition, was the fact that he had remained for even the one lesson. He next went to a private art school run by George Bridgman, where for several months he studied in all seriousness. During this period he turned out theatrical posters, one of which was bought by Andrew Carnegie.

Barrymore says, "If I had any talent at all, it was for choosing uncanny subjects. I always had a love for the macabre."

The following is a quotation from the criticism of Hjalmar Hjorth on John Barrymore's work as an artist at this time (1901):

"Young Mr. Barrymore's art work is of interest, not only because he has left the beaten paths, but because he displays considerable power of thought and technique. The anatomy is correct and his work is well ordered. It has strength of

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the kind that arrests and holds the eye. Despair, Unrest, Fear and Jealousy [the names of four sketches] give great promise for his future. Perhaps when old age overtakes him, he will have shown us the awakened man, scorning the spirit of unrest, uplifting the ideal shattered by jealousy; throttling gigantic despair, freed by time from the necessity of staring into the eyes of fear. . . ."

Barrymore was for a time on the art staff of the *Evening Journal* in New York, and actually worked for twenty minutes on the *Telegraph*—long enough to draw and submit a cartoon which was not accepted. His stay on the *Journal* did last longer, two years in fact, but terminated when he was ordered to do a drawing to illustrate a story by Arthur Brisbane. He had been out carousing the night before with reporters and photographers, with the result that his work was so bad that Mr. Brisbane, perhaps in desperation, suggested he try acting.

His uncle, John Drew, in his biography, *My Years on the Stage*, speaks of Barrymore's drawings as clever, but involved. "I remember one," he says, "entitled the 'Web of Life,' in which a lot of weird people were trying to get across some place. It carried an editorial note which began, 'This is not an unpleasant picture when looked at properly.'"

"Is the story true?" John was asked one day, not so long





# *The Royal Family*





My half brother  
John Drew



MAL  
JOHN



UNCLE



GEORGIANA DREW (HARRY MORE)  
JOHN'S MOTHER





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ago, "that you once pawned an actor's false teeth in order to buy food?"

"It's a gross libel!" he exclaimed. "The truth is that I had a friend in those days, when I was toying with a brush and paper, by the name of Frank Butler. He had a gold tooth, which we both used to hock to get a few cents for buns and coffee."

There were times when John would have starved but for Ethel, who always more or less mothered him. She would pay for lodgings for both her brothers in a roominghouse on West Thirty-sixth Street, where she lived whenever she was in New York City.

During the days of predatory expeditions into the ways of art, Barrymore's best friends were Karl Decker, a newspaperman and war correspondent, and Rip Anthony, man about town. In company with Frank Butler, these four horsemen of happy starvation got into all sorts of devilment. To cite one of their milder efforts, they proceeded one night, when in convivial mood, to climb Dewey Arch and remove the sword of Victory. Triumphantlly they marched with it from Madison Square, all through the streets, to Broadway.

Eventually, after a hard struggle, Barrymore decided that, having no desire to succumb to malnutrition, he must exchange the palette and brush for the motley and the buskin. It seemed he could make more money painting his own nose

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than someone else's. But, with Romeo's apothecary, "his poverty and not his will consented."

Ethel, or Ee-thel as John loves to call her, was responsible for his first professional appearance. She had made a great success in a play of Clyde Fitch's called *Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines*, and was playing a return of the show engagement in Philadelphia. The mother of one of the actors in the cast died suddenly. The actor had to leave without giving anyone a chance to rehearse his part, there being no understudy.

"You'll have to go on tonight, Jake," announced Ethel to her young brother (she always calls him Jake in return for his Ee-thel). "We can't get anyone else, so you'll simply have to do it."

"Of course, I didn't know my lines and yet I walked to the theater that night just as nonchalantly as if nothing were happening. I floundered around for a while, but in the middle of an important scene, I just gave up and said to the poor perspiring actor who was playing with me, 'I've blown up, where do we go from here?'

"I thought Ethel would die. Somehow or other I managed to be onstage by myself at the end of the act, and when the curtain went up, I took a bow.

"Charles Frohman happened to be in the audience, and said to me afterwards:

" 'With a better memory, you might make a comedian

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some day. As a matter of fact, your own lines got more laughs than the rest of the show.' "

And that's how it all began.

John made his debut at the Cleveland Theatre, Chicago, October 31, 1903, with Nance O'Neil's company in *Magda*, but his notices were most discouraging. Several of the friends who were sitting in front laughed at him. Then the truth dawned upon him. He didn't know how to act!

But nothing bothered him in those days. He likes to tell people that he never studied acting, that he just stumbled on the stage and trusted to luck and heredity, that he is very lazy because he enjoys high imagination, that he loves to be idle, to lounge around in a dressing gown, to sit with a cigarette and a good brand of Scotch beside him and muse about his future. "But we're not all like that." And he adds quickly, "Lionel and Ethel really work for perfection."

John said once to Ashton Stevens, then staff writer on the Los Angeles *Examiner*, when asked about his brother, "Lionel not only has the quality within, but the quality—that unconscious technique—with which to put forth his great talent. Lionel is a paradox, in that he is both delineator and analyst; he does not have to depend upon his personality."

When asked, some years later, if he ever took life seriously, John replied, "I have been described as a wastrel and a dilettante, when really I was only having a good time.

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I'm having a merry, full, and uninhibited life, but I've always been able to laugh at myself. And in my opinion, anyone who can do that is pretty well able to keep his feet on the ground."

John, a tyro when first he joined *Magda*, had to carve a niche for himself before he was taken into the famous "Royal Family." He had made up his mind, anyway, not to be known as "Ethel Barrymore's little brother."

## CHAPTER THREE

### APPRENTICESHIP—ACHIEVEMENT

THERE WERE PLENTY OF PEOPLE IN HIS OWN FAMILY TO teach John acting, but he declares that he learned more from William Collier than from any other person. It was in 1903 that John made his debut in New York at the Savoy Theatre as Corley in *Glad of It*, the same year that David Belasco bought the Stuyvesant Theatre, put in his own famous lighting effects, and called it the Belasco. (The very theater where Barrymore was to make his comeback to the New York stage in a comedy entitled *My Dear Children* in 1940.) Weber and Fields were appearing at their Music Hall at Twenty-ninth Street and Broadway. Broadway was then a Bohemian street, not an avenue of Coca-Cola signs and traffic policemen.

In *Glad of It*, John played the part of a press agent for a serio-comic artist. It was one of the gabbiest plays Clyde Fitch ever wrote. One critic summed it up by saying it might be described as "Too Much of It." With him in that com-



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pany were Hassard Short, now the well-known director of musical revues, and Thomas Meighan, star of silent movies. Collier watched John in this show, saw the enormous possibilities that were lying dormant in him, and determined to work on John. Collier himself had had many years of experience, coming into the theater as a call boy and playing his first part in Shakespeare as the page in the induction of the *Taming of the Shrew*, and with John Drew in Daly's production of *Love's Labour's Lost* in 1891.

John's voice in his early years was narrow in range and monotonous in tone. His chief assets then were his handsome face and his charming personality. Yet by apprenticeship he acquired that humor, that satirical humor, so effective in serio-comic parts, which had made his father such a success. And within five years he had developed his voice to such an extent as to be able to handle any speaking part and even to sing a leading role in a musical comedy.

Maurice Nitke, Russian violinist, and conductor for many of John's dramatic successes, says, "The interpretive art is far greater than vocal art, and requires a man of the highest artistic understanding to paint a picture of a composition which takes such a short time. John Barrymore has that art."

What is the secret? Heredity is not all, and John knows that. The frivolity that he had feigned for so long, and the laziness that was still to continue for quite a while, were

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not the real John, nor did they lead to the royal road. Work, and work only, is the answer. In his early twenties he was thoroughly trained by Collier to be a light comedian. He played for nearly three years in Richard Harding Davis's *The Dictator*, in New York, London, and Australia, at a salary of less than forty dollars a week.

Young Barrymore led Willie Collier a dance during that tour. Receipts, indifferent audiences, strikes, were as nothing in comparison to the worry he caused. He was always late for train calls, and on one particular occasion when there was no other train for twenty-four hours, Collier begged of John to leave a call at his hotel. The company arrived at the station in good time the next day, but there was no sign of John. Poor Collier was frantic. Just as the guard was shouting, "All aboard!" John sauntered up in evening clothes, clutching a suitcase.

"This sort of thing has got to stop!" yelled the furious producer. "Why didn't you leave a call at your hotel?"

"I did, but I couldn't tell where I would stop last night, so I left calls at six or seven hotels, only I didn't hit the right one."

It was while the company was waiting passage to San Francisco in April 1906 that the great earthquake felled the city. No biography of Barrymore could be complete without the famous reply his Uncle John Drew made to Ethel when

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she received the long telegram from John describing the harrowing days he had spent during the earthquake. He was starving, exhausted, and was being made to work with soldiers digging up the debris.

"Do you believe it?" she said to her uncle, who was unusually quiet.

"Every word," he replied. "It took a convulsion of nature to get him out of bed and the United States Army to put him to work."

John had been to the opera *Carmen* that fateful night and was walking back to his hotel when the first shock occurred. As he reached the hotel entrance, the second one took place, and he had to run. He remembers seeing Collier in a dressing gown sitting on a block of debris, and how they both shouted with laughter at each other's attire. John was in dress clothes in the middle of an earthquake! He also remembers seeing Madame Alda in a terrible state of excitement, and recalls trying everywhere to get brandy for her (and perhaps for himself), and poor Caruso sitting forlornly on a trunk.

Having no time to pack, Collier and Barrymore decided to obey orders to run for their lives. They buried all their belongings, which had happily escaped destruction, in one large trunk, for safekeeping until their return, but when they did come back some time later, it was to find that a subsequent shock had completely demolished the trunk.

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They escaped from the earthquake, Collier taking a government boat, and the company following in launches. They caught the ferry to Oakland; thence by boat to Vancouver, and on, eventually to Australia, where they toured for a solid year. John still raves about Grace Palotta, the beautiful girl whom he met in Sydney. She originated the song "Oh Listen to the Band," which became so popular.

When Barrymore returned to San Francisco, Ashton Stevens met him and asked him if he was glad to be back. John replied very characteristically, "I like San Francisco—I even fail to miss the village I left behind me—New York. Everybody there is so nicely packed in the gelatine of satisfaction—like prawn in aspic. Where the audience is a hulking monster with four thousand eyes and forty thousand teeth, with a hide that might have been torn from a battleship, with warts on it like hills—that monster unit with one great mind that can make or break an actor like me. You are lucky if you are pleasing food for that monster."

John made such a personal success in London in *The Dictator* that when Mr. Frohman brought him home from Piccadilly to play in a foolish piece called *Sunday*, in which Ethel also acted, duchesses and countesses shed gallons of tears that their darling was not with them any more.

*Pantaloons* and *Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire*, both written by James M. Barrie, were John's next vehicles. *Pantaloons* was a one-act fantasy put on as a curtain raiser. It proved to be a

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charming whimsy; a story of Pantaloon, who feels himself losing ground because he is too old. Lionel was Pantaloon, and John played Clown, a charming part of which he was very fond.

Almost twenty years later he repeated it at one of his rare Hollywood parties, with specially painted scenery of his own design, one costume in his version of *Pantaloon* probably costing almost as much as the whole original New York production. But more about this anon.

*Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire* was the play which immediately followed the curtain raiser. Ethel at a very youthful age played Alice's mother, the role created by the great Ellen Terry in London. John appeared as Rollo, a weak-pated sort of fellow. Although it was not an outstanding play of Barrie's, and many people took exception to the fact that John was making ardent love to his sister on the stage, it ran a whole season.

Ethel, at that time, had definite plans for putting on special matinees of different classics on Saturdays. When she was touring with *Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire*, she staged a special performance of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. John took the role of Dr. Rack very successfully. Ethel was as proud of Jack as any mother hen of her chick. This part had been a special test of her brother's ability, for she had always felt he could rise to heights above the light comedies he was doing. John had found himself.

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But he was always a spendthrift. Even so far back as 1907 he was running true to form. After playing in three or four successes, he found he had saved nothing, and at one time in Atlantic City was so broke that he had to sell his beautiful lapis lazuli cuff links in order to get back to New York.

For quite a while he was again visiting the lunch routes from Third Avenue to Tenth. He knew the special days on which his good friends the bartenders handed out free lunches. Not only was he stranded, but he was also getting heavily into debt. He owed a big bill to his doctor. Ethel heard of it and promptly paid. By the strangest coincidence, that same afternoon John met one of his friends, who happened to have a ticket for a show which he gave to Barrymore.

John was pleased to accept it, and was enjoying the performance immensely when two rows ahead of him he spied his doctor. The first intermission came, John leaned forward and whispered loudly, "Hey, Doc, did you get that this morning? You know what I mean."

"Why, yes," he replied. "I did."

"Good, then let's go right out and spend it," said John, and before the doctor had time to refuse, they had left the theater. It's very hard to say no to a Barrymore.

Things were going from bad to worse for John, but just as he was thinking of having to sleep on a Bryant Park bench something turned up. Arnold Daly, who was then

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acting in *The Boys of Company B* on Broadway, did not want to go on the road, and Mr. Frohman was looking for someone to take his place. Suddenly, out of the blue, came the recollection of a promise he had made to Jack Barrymore a couple of seasons back: "Another year's experience and I'll give you a job." Here was the opportunity to keep his word, and John got Arnold Daly's part.

*Miss Civilization* followed; then *Toddles*, featuring a sort of silly ass who does not know if he wants to get married or not, and finally *A Stubborn Cinderella*, the first engagement in which Barrymore drew a three-figured salary. Up to now his pay check had not exceeded fifty dollars.

In the last-named play, John appeared in long curls, a dashing white costume adorned with frills, and sang songs. It ran for two years in Chicago, although one critic wrote that the play was remarkable for its mediocre workmanship, and that "but for John Barrymore, who is becoming an operatic comedian," it would have no footing. It was a complete failure on Broadway.

John's attention was brought to a little girl from the East Side whose one dream was to go to a ball. He ordered that a dress be made for her, and promised to escort her to the great theatrical ball, which was held annually, but John found that he could not get away from the theater in time, so he arranged for his valet to act as a temporary escort, ordered a taxi, and instructed his man to give the little girl

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every attention until he arrived there himself, which John did as soon as he possibly could.

This was no stubborn Cinderella, but a very bewildered one. In the space of but a few hours, she had become one of the most envied girls on the East Side—a guest among Broadway stars, with handsome John Barrymore for a dancing partner. But the valet turned out to be her real Prince Charming.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### *FIRST LOVE—FIRST MARRIAGE*

IN 1902 THERE WAS A MUSICAL COMEDY CALLED *The Wild Rose* running at the Knickerbocker Theatre in New York under the management of George Lederer. In the show was a sixteen-year-old girl, whose beauty was to take the world by storm. Picture post cards of her were sold by the thousands in the streets of London and on Broadway. Her name was Evelyn Nesbit.

Evelyn was the adored of Stanford White, the most famous architect of his day. John described him as the Lorenzo de' Medici of Broadway. It was at a luncheon given by White that John first met Evelyn. Ever susceptible to beauty, he sat at the table, unable to take his eyes from her face. At last his opportunity came—Stanford was called to the telephone. Barrymore bent swiftly over the table, and in a whisper asked her for her address.

Night after night Evelyn's dressing room, on one side, would be piled with hundreds of dollars' worth of orchids—

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tokens of admiration from Stanford White. On the other side of her room, in a circular basket as big as the mouth of a barrel, were violets, from another millionaire, who was also madly in love with her. But, placed in a glass of water beside her would always be found an American Beauty rosebud surrounded by violets bound together by wire into a simple nosegay, a card accompanying it with such messages as this inscribed upon it: "To a quivering pink poppy, in a golden wind-swept space," and signed "Jack." It was with this little bunch of flowers pinned on her coat that she went, after the show, past the wealthy stage-door Johnnies and out into the street, to have supper with the then almost unknown Mr. Barrymore. How furious those few flowers made her other admirers she alone knew, and reveled in it.

When she was asked recently about John, whom she had not seen for nearly thirty years, until he ran into her in a Chicago night club, she described him as being the handsomest, kindest man she had ever known. She spoke of how proud she was to be seen with him, and how they laughed at his witticisms.

"He was born twenty years ahead of his time," she went on to say. "If he were a young man now, with his magnificent beauty, the Clark Gables, the Tyrone Powers, and the Robert Taylors would not be able to hold a candle to him."

John would send her love notes with little sketches,

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inviting her to supper, quite often at an Italian restaurant on Eighth Avenue, while the champagne parties of the rich had to proceed without her. One night, having supper with her at Rector's, John ordered a glass of milk. Even the waiter raised an eyebrow, but it was brought. Pulling a red rose petal from the flowers that decorated the table, Barrymore threw it on the top of the milk, saying, "That is your mouth."

He would comment on her beautiful complexion and call her "The Pink One," on account of her coloring. Beauty was natural in the days of the turn of the century. No woman would dare to wear lipstick if she wished to be accepted by society, and no woman smoked in public.

Stanford White gave wonderful parties to which John was always invited. Here the great painters and sculptors of the day met and discussed art. Harrington Mann, the English portrait painter, who did two beautiful canvases of Evelyn Nesbit; Augustus Saint-Gaudens, the sculptor; Frederick MacMonnies, who created the famous "Bacchante" now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art; George Grey Barnard, for whom Evelyn posed—all were guests at these parties. John eagerly listened to their comments, meanwhile perhaps unconsciously contributing to their artistic pleasure by the haunting charm of his masculine beauty.

One little supper party for two, at their favorite restaurant on Eighth Avenue, brought a forcible conclusion to John

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and Evelyn's romance. They had talked and laughed a great deal, and incidentally had drunk too much. Evelyn was afraid to go home to her mother, and John was at his wit's end to know what to do. They decided that she had better stay the night at his little den under the eaves, which was not much better than an attic. Evelyn says he wrapped her up with infinite care in the cloak his father had worn as Orlando, and spent the night wondering what would happen the next day.

It was early afternoon when she awoke. John was still in a state of acute anxiety, knowing what Evelyn's mother and Stanford White (of whom she was quite afraid) would say. The two young people sat gloomily in an ice-cream parlor eating vanilla fudge while they pondered their dilemma. At last Evelyn decided that she had better go home, and took John with her. Both her mother and Stanford White were furious. They had been up all night looking for her. White, who already had a wife and son living at Southampton, but who was devoted in his way to Evelyn, locked her in his doctor's house, while her mother made arrangements to send her back to school.

In the meantime John had proposed marriage to her, and she says herself, "I'm sure I must be the only woman who ever said no to John Barrymore." John himself says that she was the only woman he ever proposed to, for he swears that all his wives married him.

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Her mother sent Evelyn back to school at Pompton, New Jersey, which was, as it happens, run by Mrs. de Mille, mother of Cecil B. de Mille, the famous Hollywood director. Not long after, Evelyn fell madly in love with Harry Thaw, scion of an old Pennsylvania family, and married him. There was a terrible hatred between Thaw and White. In 1907 Evelyn Thaw was the central figure in her husband's sensational murder trial. Stanford White was shot by Harry Thaw, on the opening night in June 1906 of the Madison Square Roof Garden in New York.

When John read in the newspapers that Evelyn had testified in court that he had proposed marriage to her, and that she had refused, "because at one time she had had a complex against marriage," he fled, not having any desire to be brought into the case. But he was getting too well known to be able to escape easily. He was found at Poland Springs, Maine, hiding at the Mansion House. In a very excitable state, John was furious at being questioned.

The case had created such a furor that everyone who knew the Thaws was subpoenaed by William Travers Jerome, then District Attorney for New York.

During these troublesome days, John happened to be the house guest of a friend of his, who was giving a week-end duck-shooting party. Of course the Thaw case was discussed. John, having the initials J. B. B. (John Barrymore Blythe)

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very firmly embossed upon all his baggage, was introduced to the guests by his host as Mr. J. Baffling Bright.

"Well," laughs John when recounting this story, "no man ever heard such things said about himself, as I heard that night."

Later he went to a real hideout, a farm somewhere up-state, but a minion of the law discovered him. John received him courteously, and they talked of this and that over a few drinks. By the time they had recovered from a glorious bout, the Thaw case was over.

In 1910 John met his first wife, the beautiful Katherine Corri Harris. She was the daughter of Sidney Harris, prominent lawyer, and Mrs. Katherine Brady Harris, socialite.

They met at a ball given by Mrs. Astor. Katherine fell madly in love with the fascinating actor, about whom all New York was talking, and defied an angry family in order to find happiness with him.

Katherine was a charming and cultured girl, with a splendid figure and an intelligent head, crowned with a halo of golden curls. She had always had a love for the theater, and when John Barrymore, idol of the worshipful feminine multitude, paid court to her, she was entranced. Immediately her friends and family got to work. They were not going to let their darling get tangled up with an actor. "Infatuation" was held up to her like a red flag:

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"The whole thing will be disastrous."

"Actors are worthless fellows, anyway."

"His success is not going to last, the public will get tired of him," and the usual advice that accompanies the not unusual situation.

But Katherine was quite deaf to them all. And so the foundations of this romance were built on one of the bitterest quarrels that ever shook an old New York family. Even her aunt, Mrs. Herbert Harriman (formerly Mrs. Stevens of Stevens castle—one of the oldest American families), told her niece that she would withdraw the tidy fortune which she intended to give her for a wedding present, if she persisted in marrying an actor. Despite these threats and quarrels, the romance grew stronger. With the help of Ethel, who thoroughly approved of the match, and was always ready to chaperone the pretty blonde, the two saw more and more of each other.

John was playing the part of Nathaniel Duncan in *The Fortune Hunter*, the highly successful play produced by Cohan and Harris, at the Gaiety Theatre, when the romance blossomed. After Barrymore had played the part for nearly a year both on Broadway and on tour, he decided he must have a rest. Paris might be rather attractive, but he must give a party first. He bought out the entire house for a matinee and invited the whole Barrymore and Drew family, as well as their visiting list.

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It was the greatest theatrical round-up of the season. There were fifteen hundred members of the profession in the audience, from big stars to colored porters. The theater was packed to the ceiling. When the instigator of the party was called upon to make a speech, he pleased everyone by addressing them as "fellow unfortunates." Next day he sailed happily for Europe, where he visited old friends and, as usual, many new ones, among them some assorted relatives of Czar Nicholas—one aunt, a sister, and a niece.

However, the moment the French liner, *La Provence*, docked with the returning Barrymore aboard, he was met by Sidney Harris, Katherine's father, very irate and still hoping to dissuade him from marrying his daughter. He put forward the theory that Katherine's feelings were no more than infatuation for an actor on the stage, that she was much too young, being but eighteen, while John was twenty-seven. But Romeo was not to be dissuaded, and he regarded Mr. Harris's anger with indifference.

When Harris found he could do nothing, he ordered his divorced wife to take Katherine to France and put her in a school, which, strange to say, she did, for she knew her ex-husband's temper. Within a few weeks Kathie's grandmother had brought her back again.

All America was interested in the progress of this romance, and people eagerly scanned the newspapers for the latest development. John told the press, "Katherine and I



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have taken out a marriage license, to show people that we are sincere. Of course, it would be nice to have everyone agreeable, but, if people want to make a fuss—we can't help that, and we are not at all worried."

Upon reading this, thousands of school girls, housewives, secretaries in offices, and hungry spinsters sat back and sighed happily. The marriage took place in September 1910 at the Roman Catholic Church of Saint Francis Xavier on West Sixteenth Street. Father Thomas S. Harlin officiated. It was a quiet and charming wedding; only a few intimate friends and relatives were present. The bride's mother and grandmother were there, and Ethel Barrymore and her husband, Russell G. Colt, were the witnesses. Minor infelicities in the affair were the absence of the bride's father, who refused to attend, the loss of a fortune from the bride's aunt, and, incidentally, the payment of fifty thousand dollars to John's managers, who had protected themselves by taking out an insurance policy for that amount against the possibility of his marriage during the run of *The Fortune Hunter*.

A wedding breakfast was served at Delmonico's. As is the fate of so many marriages in the theater world, the bridal pair were not able to go on a honeymoon, for the show was still playing to capacity business. Mrs. Barrymore returned with her sister-in-law and brother to their home in Mamaronck, New York, where Ethel still makes her home.

## First Love—First Marriage

After touring for nearly a year, playing the same part, John went on in vaudeville in a sketch, at a salary of fifteen hundred dollars a week. Katherine was his leading lady, and the sketch was called *Anatol*, one of the six stories from Schnitzler's *The Affairs of Anatol*. It was a charming piece, but did not have general appeal; in other words, it was a flop.

Cecil Lean, a Chicago comedian, met John one day, and had a suggestion for him. "*Anatol* is too highbrow," he said. "It needs a bit of comedy to buck it up."

"What would you suggest, old man?" asked Barrymore, always ready for advice.

"Well, you have a dish of oranges on the table in that set, don't you?"

"Yes," said John, wondering what was coming next.

"Now, Jack, instead of playing the whole thing straight toward the end, let your wife catch the oranges in the paper basket, as you throw them to her, and liven it up that way. Sort of comic-relief idea."

After Cecil had gone, John and Katherine had a good laugh, the whole idea was so ludicrous. But the show could not be a worse flop than it already was, so they decided to try Lean's suggestion. It was an instantaneous success, and the sketch ran for many weeks after that.

John signed with the Famous Players Film Company for

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a silent picture, *Are You a Mason?* As part of of his business in the film, he had to appear at an antique shop on West Twenty-eighth Street. In front of this place stood a statue of Venus. In a happy state of inebriety, John was called upon to drape the statue in coat, scarf, ear muffs, etc. A woman and a man happened to be passing. All of a sudden she gripped the man's arm.

"Oh, look," she said, "it's poor Jack Barrymore. Look what he's come to." A deep sigh followed. "I wonder what his poor daughter Ethel would think," and she passed sadly into the crowd.

This so convulsed Barrymore that the whole scene had to be shot over again.

Following this picture, John made several comedies: *An American Citizen*, *The Man from Mexico*, and *Here Comes the Bride*. Katherine appeared with her husband successfully in a movie called *Nearly a King*, in which she gave a good interpretation of the crown princess, while John acted a dual role of a prince and an out-of-work actor. When the Broadway season opened, they both appeared in *Believe Me Xanthippe*, *Princess Zim Zim*, and *The Affairs of Anatol*.

Many people ask John how he became the owner of the title, the "Great Lover," and he always replies that he has no idea. Indeed, so clumsy a lover was he in the early days that when one play called for the heroine to melt into

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his arms, on the opening night he happened to side-step, and the poor leading lady almost fell on the floor. Nice technique!

But no matter what he played, the "love" tag stuck. If he had met with an accident necessitating the use of crutches, the producers would still find him a "necking" part. Something had to be done. He determined to dodge these grappling roles and undertook instead the characterization of Chick Hewes in a play entitled *Kick In*. It was intense melodrama.

During the run of this play at the Longacre Theatre, Ned Sheldon, John's greatest friend, and the brilliant author of *Romance* and many other well-known plays, told him that he would never amount to anything as an actor until he did real drama. He has been grateful all his life to Ned for giving him such persistently good advice. But at first he would not listen; he's that sort of person. He had always liked comic parts. After all, he began his career in "prat-falls," low comedy shows with plenty of slapstick, where everyone sits down on the stage with a bang sooner or later.

It was while Barrymore was playing in a silly comedy picture in 1922 that the idea of filming *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* was first conceived. He had just finished the second reel of the comedy, and was making a hideous grimace behind the director's back. This was left in the rushes by

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mistake. When the thing was reeled off, seeing that John was good at making faces, the director decided he might possibly be able to act. John was signed again, and quite a while later the first celluloid version of Stevenson's great story was made.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### "JUSTICE"—"PETER IBBETSON"

IN 1914 THERE WAS A PRODUCER ON BROADWAY WHO WAS known for his astuteness in business, his making of fantastic promises, which he always kept, for his pleasant manner, untidy appearance, and inevitable cigar. He was then in his late thirties. That man was Al Woods.

It was he who gave John his first chance at melodrama, in the play by William Mack called *Kick In*. A few years later, it was this same Mr. Woods who came to John's rescue when he was looking for money for another play, the beautiful *Peter Ibbetson*, of which more anon.

Mr. Woods's specialty had been bedroom farces, but *Kick In* was a real melodrama. As part of the business in this show, Barrymore had to have a terrific fist fight with a detective. One night the fight became so realistic that both men fell into the footlights. John, of course, thought Woods would be wild, but instead he came running backstage shouting, "Keep it in, it's marvelous." So it was kept in,

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until the bill for the electric lights became too heavy.

*The Yellow Ticket* followed. It was another melodrama, a story of Russian intrigue, full of adventure, with Florence Reed the feminine interest. Elissa Landi enacted this role when the play was made into a movie, with Lionel Barrymore as the grasping villain.

But things were not going well for John; he was moody and depressed. Everybody wondered. Nothing was right. The stagehands stood whispering in corners. What was the matter? The tenants in the apartment house where the Barrymores lived could supply the answer to that question. John's marriage to Katherine was floundering.

That John Barrymore is a genius few will deny, and it is ever so with genius, that it requires a mate who will not oppose him who possesses it. Perhaps that has been Barrymore's tragedy. Every woman he has married has tried during some part of her life with him to share in his acting glories. Perhaps if any one of them had been content to remain in the background entirely, like Mrs. Bernard Shaw, who is quite satisfied to leave the limelight to "The Genius," or Signora Toscanini, who is happy to be "This Man's Wife," or Cosima Wagner, who so thoroughly understood the needs of genius and gave her whole life to the building up of her husband's great reputation—perhaps there would not have been so many divorces in John's history.

Barrymore was a great disappointment to his wife. Kath-

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erine was always a charming, delightful companion, but she looked upon actors as jolly fellows, whose amusing monkey-shines continued after the theater, at gay restaurants, and Bohemian studios. John had a secret passion for domesticity. To him, marriage meant escape from Broadway. To Katherine's bewilderment, this husband of hers who she thought would be a glamorous party companion turned out to be a dull goof, who wanted bedroom slippers and a cozy fireside, a comfortable bathrobe to relax in instead of evening clothes. John was not interested in society, and yet Katherine and he were inundated with invitations. Everyone wanted them.

Katherine found that while her husband did love the fire-side, he loved equally well an innocent night with "the boys"—his old newspaper pals. Then there was John's habitual slovenliness. He has always enjoyed the comfort of a shaggy beard, and insists upon wearing a dilapidated hat of very uncertain color. He has always hated to pretty himself; he feels he has enough of that before the camera. Nothing pleases him better than to hear that his dress suit has been put away in moth balls. (One can well understand how extraordinary this behavior must have seemed to a girl used to dressing every night for dinner in her own home.)

Although John has been married to three of the most beautiful women in America, no one seems to have been able to make the domestic hearth attractive enough to lure him from more exciting adventures outside. It is a curious thing



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to notice that, although his first three wives claimed to find marriage with him so unbearable, they all ventured again bravely into the state of matrimony without a qualm. Of course, it must be said that each one chose as her second soul mate a less spectacular person than the one and only "Wild Jack."

Katherine and John did start afresh time and time again, but a gulf yawned between them which seemed unbridgeable, and they decided to separate. The newspapers carried the report: Katherine Harris at last gives up matinee idol, for love of whom she braved her father's displeasure, deprived her mother of a handsome income, and caused her family to be torn asunder. She complained to the court that the glamor her husband had seen in her had worn off, and that she was obliged to appear on the stage with him to catch a glimpse of him.

It is, undoubtedly, no easy matter to be the wife of a successful actor. After a while the sweetest and most self-effacing woman tires of having her husband mobbed by admirers every time he makes an exit from the theater. It gives her the feeling that she should be the happiest woman in the world, but she isn't. It makes her feel, knowing his faults, that she is the victim of some mistake, and she loses her peace of mind.

A story is told by one of the tenants in the apartment house where John and Katherine lived for some time in

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New York City's Gramercy Park. “Every now and then we would hear the Barrymores quarreling—their voices could be heard all over the building. When the contretemps became too frequent, several of the tenants held a meeting to discuss what was to be done. It was eventually decided to write a letter of complaint to the landlord, which was to be signed by the tenants. The letter was written, but the very next day the two young Barrymores were seen, arm in arm, strolling around the park, as if nothing had ever happened to disturb their connubial bliss, and as happy as two love birds. The letter never did get mailed!”

John had a friend, Jack Prescott. This same Jack, Edward Sheldon, and Barrymore were a sort of Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, and were often seen together, excepting on nights when John felt the urge for some really boisterous fun. Then, Sheldon, the scholar of the three, would return to his books, while the two Jacks wended their way to a certain tavern. Whenever these two got together, adventure of some kind was in the air.

There was at this time a sort of longshoreman's delight, in the form of an eating house, under the Brooklyn Bridge, known as Lonergan's. This place was noted for three reasons: first, for its being the rendezvous of famous newspapermen; second, for the wonderful meal that was served at 4 A.M. especially for them; third, for its fights. Patrons could be accommodated with a scrap at the drop of a hat.

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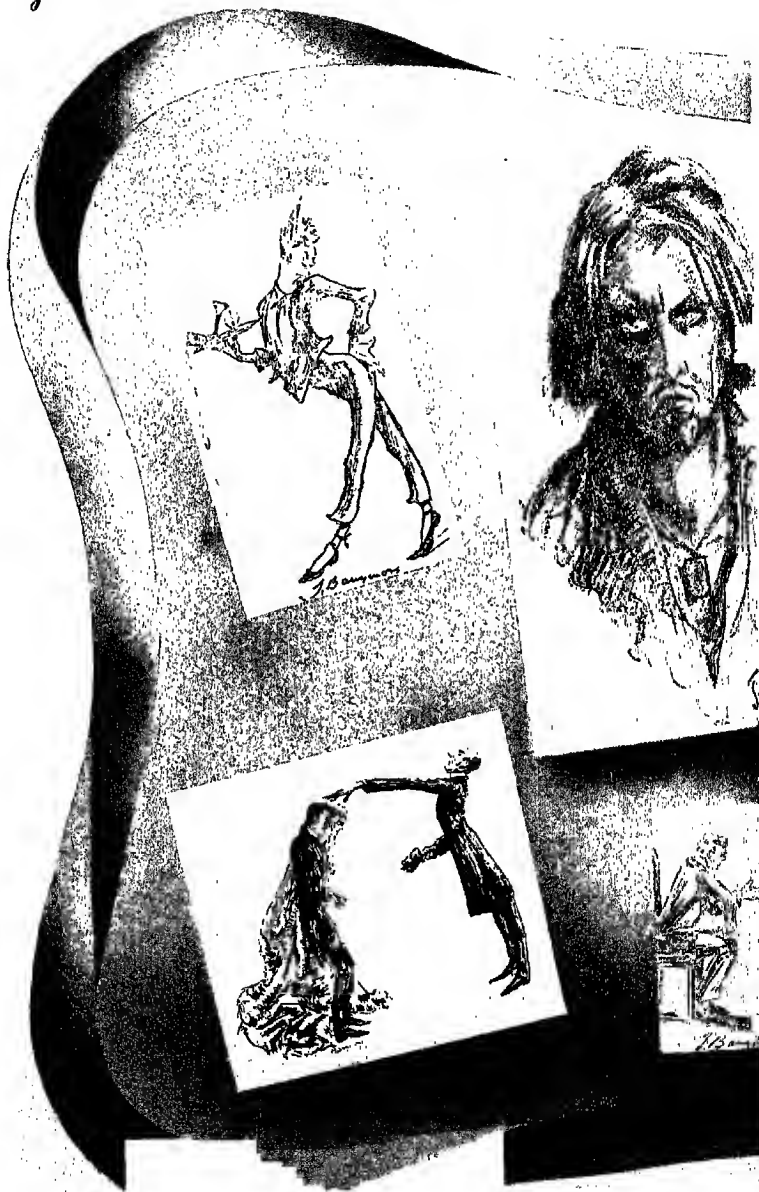
To this famous eating house, its floor sprinkled with sawdust and its tables embellished with red-and-white-checked cloth, came the two boys ready for anything the night might bring forth. They would partake of the deliciously cooked steaks and drink beer, delighting the while in the jargon of the newspapermen, for, after all, John was at heart one of them. Should no spontaneous fight be forthcoming, Barrymore would say something provoking to Prescott (this being prearranged) and Prescott would get up, push back his chair—and the fight was on. Needless to say, it always ended pleasantly, and the two Jacks would greet the daylight in merry mood, looking forward to another visit to Lonergan's the next day.

But this was no life for an actor, and John knew it. There was a yearning in his heart, a certain restlessness; perhaps a change of scenery and occupation was needed. Adopting the time-tried remedy, he went to Paris again, this time to join Lionel, who had an atelier in the Latin Quarter and was engaged in painting and etching.

John was searching for a new play. He has always subscribed to the theory that an actor should play a part only so long as he can give his best to it. To put it in his own words: "Everything an actor does should be better than the thing he did before. You can stretch a rubber band for a long time, but the rubber keeps getting thinner and thinner.



*Barrymore The Artist*







## "Justice"—"Peter Ibbetson"

It is the same with an actor. Every time an artist gives a sincere performance, he is tossing the audience a small bit of his vitals, and managers seem to think that each one of us is a Prometheus, with an everlasting liver. The day comes when there's nothing else to throw." A new play then there must be!

John also had another reason for seeing his brother; a definite determination to bring Lionel back to the stage. He had been away from Broadway too long. "You can paint between productions, you can continue your work. We'll have a studio together in New York, or where you will, but the public is not going to be deprived of your acting any longer." So spake brother John. After a siege of coaxing and reasoning, such as only John knows how to stage, Lionel consented to return to the footlights, provided they could find a suitable play. They both read scripts like mad when they were not talking of the happy, careless days of their boyhood. They compared the past with the present, and wished that Ethel were with them. They walked together at night through the crowded boulevards under the twinkling lights of a happy Paris, telling of future plans, building financial and artistic castles.

Edward Sheldon had already offered John the part of the clergyman in *Romance*, the most beautiful play he ever wrote. It ran for many years both here and in England. John



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turned it down, because he could not see himself as a clergyman passionately in love, but has always regretted that he did not do it when the chance came along.

At last the great drama was found, Galsworthy's *Justice*, stark unadulterated tragedy. But in their search, the two brothers had come across another beautiful play written in Italian, which they felt would make a wonderful vehicle for them both. There had already been a French production of the play in Paris at the Sarah Bernhardt Theatre in 1910. The leading part was played by the great actress herself, with much success. The play was called *La Sena della Beffe* ("The Supper of Practical Jokes"), and was written by the Italian poet Sem Benelli. There were two excellent parts in it; one, that of young Giannetto, a Florentine artist of the fifteenth century, which John wanted to play, and the other, that of Neri Chiaramentesi, a mighty braggart, an arrogant man of brutal strength. The great diversity of character in the two men appealed enormously to the two brothers, and there and then they made up their minds to get the machinery in motion for eventual production.

With these questions settled in his mind, John had to return to America to fulfill a picture assignment, *The In-corrigible Dukane*—a comedy described by the *New York Review* as "the best acrobatic show in town." Certainly John stopped at nothing, for in this picture he was dressed as a

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tramp, and had to undergo the following: A fist blow on the jaw, being thrown on the head out of a saloon, knocked onto a slag pile, pitched bodily onto a camp table, knocked out by a giant Westerner, run over by a horse, dragged round by the neck, patted in the eye by a tough foreman, attacked by a brutal mob, pounded by a lead pipe, set upon by a construction gang, and subjected to twenty-two trick falls on the ear.

To be able to go direct from slapstick comedy to stark drama and make a great success of both may reasonably be called a symptom of genius. *Justice* was the story of William Falder, a weak-willed clerk in an attorney's office, who forges a check, in a moment of anguish, to save the life of the girl he loves. It was stark tragedy from beginning to end, the story of the blind goddess riding in triumph over broken hearts. It was always the underdog in the social structure who evoked Galsworthy's interest. The play itself has been considered by some to be the greatest English tragedy since Shelley's *Cenci*. The American production was presented by Arthur Hopkins at the Candler Theatre in 1916. The same play had been a great success in London six years before, with Dennis Eadie in the leading part. When first produced there, its revelations of the English penal system made such a stir that the Home Secretary inaugurated a reform of English prison methods, within a few hours after

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the first performance, just as in an earlier day Charles Dickens's book *Oliver Twist* did so much to reform charity schools.

It is hard to believe that the clever comedian and dashing lover, John Barrymore, could transform himself into a grim, passive character, desperately caught in the web of the law, and finally driven to suicide. But he did it, and his work was described as a "characterization which has been unparalleled in the theater of our time."

Up to this time Barrymore had taken his work in an easy-going manner, but he now showed his public what he could do to justify their faith in him. Nor did his modesty fail him. He had actually demanded of Hopkins that his name on the house boards be made smaller and that of Galsworthy's larger, for John honestly felt that it was the play and not the acting which drew the crowds.

One night Barrymore followed two men who had seen the play, to hear their criticisms. They walked ahead of him in complete silence until they turned a corner and entered a saloon. One said in a tone of disgust, "God Almighty! What a show!" A long pause. Finally the second one said, "Well, he's all right in pictures, anyway."

In the court scene of *Justice* there was a large man who had a bit part. He was originally engaged on account of his stentorian voice. His one line was, "Come into the court," which was said just before John entered. One night, this man

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was sick, and had been replaced by another who had a little squeaky voice. When he spoke his line, John was so astonished that under his breath he said, "My God, the man's gone queer."

In the cast were the late O. P. Heggie, the English actor, and Whitford Kane, the Irish actor, the latter having also played in the London production of *Justice*. One of the commonest things that happen in a theatrical company crept into this one, for some unaccountable reason. A feud arose between two factions in the cast, and was carried on perfectly peaceably for the duration. There was the Heggie section and the Barrymore section, and never the twain did meet.

At this time, our hero was drinking only "Bevo," a near beer that was harmless. Whitford used to have "Bevo" parties after the show and talk *Hamlet* until closing time disrupted their enchanted conversation. Why did Barrymore discuss *Hamlet* so eagerly with Whitford Kane? So intently, in fact, that it seemed he was devouring what the elder man had to say. The answer is that he was feeling the growing pains of success. He was dreaming of one day playing the melancholy Dane, as many another had done before him. In Mr. Kane he had the most famous First Grave Digger of two generations. Whitford had even then played with many Hamlets, and was, in the course of his career, to act with twenty-three all told, and to bury almost twice as many

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Ophelias! (The Ophelias very seldom stay for the whole run. They are nearly always changed.) After a very successful term in New York, the company went on tour, but it soon folded up; *Justice* was too heavy a play for the road.

Next spring Barrymore was playing in *Peter Ibbetson*. Costume parts were his hobby, but the producers would never let him act in a period play simply because they had put on some very mediocre ones, which had been dead failures, and they were afraid. He always had the urge to play character parts—the more wigs the better. He feels naked in his own face, as if he were saying to the audience, "Well, you have paid two dollars to look at the face of John Barrymore—so, here it is." He did not wear a beard in this part, but here at last was a good costume play.

The story of how this play came about is worth recording. The war in England had reached the air-raid stages. Constance Collier, the much-loved English actress, having given all her energies to getting up concerts for the wounded, or for the purpose of raising funds, had gone to bed early. An air-raid warning had been sounded, and she lay wondering what was going to happen next. A few minutes later the telephone rang. It was a call from Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, the famous Shakespearean actor, begging of her to help him entertain a journalist from France, who was also correspondent of the London *Referee*, an important theatrical

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newspaper. Sir Herbert said he was much too tired to talk to him.

Miss Collier had acted many Shakespearean roles with him and knew that when he said he was tired he was generally very rude, too. In spite of the air-raid warning, she got up and dressed. They had supper at the Carlton with the newspaperman, a Mr. Raphael. Sir Herbert soon began to look bored, and Miss Collier carried on the conversation. They discussed theater, war, and books. They discovered that they both loved George du Maurier's *Peter Ibbetson*, and the newspaperman ventured to say that he had at one time made a dramatization of it.

It was not long before the script was in Miss Collier's hands, and she became so absorbed with the idea of a production that sleep left her entirely, her mind brimful of plans. Nobody was much impressed with her idea, but knowing that she had many good friends, she put the proposition before them of producing the play at a special matinee, and, by so doing, raise money for the Base Hospital at Etaples, a task which she had been asked to do by the Countess of Huntingdon.

Here was a golden opportunity. She had asked Mr. Raphael's permission to rewrite some of the scenes, and when the play was produced there was more of Constance Collier's work in it than the newspaperman's. But when he

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came to dress rehearsal he was delighted with it; so also was the Countess, when she received nearly two thousand pounds for the fund—proceeds of one matinee.

In order to fulfill a contract in Hollywood, Miss Collier crossed the Atlantic at the height of the submarine scare, but although she was working on a picture, every spare moment was given up to plans for a *Peter Ibbetson* production in New York. One day she received word from Ned Sheldon that he had persuaded John Barrymore to play Peter. Fired with delight and fresh enthusiasm, she soon found herself in the big city trying to get backing for the production. She had Ibbetson parties everywhere. She approached everyone up to J. P. Morgan and Otto H. Kahn. She read the play to Lee Shubert, and he became interested to the extent of six thousand dollars. She and John went to Al Woods, and he put some backing in it; soon she had all that was needed.

Rehearsals were started; everyone who could give advice in any way did so. Maude Adams supervised the lights, Ned Sheldon's ever-ready pen was put to use, and Flo Ziegfeld lent some of his specially designed electric stands, which he valued highly. Two weeks before production on Broadway news came of the death of Mr. Raphael, and only a few nights before the opening they discovered that there was not enough money left for another dress rehearsal. The changing of the scenes involved the use of much machinery, and

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several more rehearsals were badly needed. They had to do without them; and on opening night, at the Republic Theatre in New York, just as John and Constance were walking toward the open door, under the spell of ecstatic love, they saw to their horror that the scenery was moving, revealing a brick wall and stagehands in their shirt sleeves. There was no help for it; the curtain had to be lowered and the scene started all over again. Such a calamity seldom happens twice, but the same thing took place the next night. John says, “I remember I had a great bag filled with gold pieces which I intended passing out to the boys backstage after the performance, but we were all so furious with them for allowing such a thing to happen, that I recall stuffing the money into my pockets and stalking out of the theater.”

This play marked the return of Lionel to the stage. He was at length induced to leave his painting in Paris when the family begged him to take the part of Colonel Ibbetson. It had been played by Henry Ainley in London, when Lionel accepted the role. Everyone was delighted. The play received only fair notices, but by the end of the first week the houses were filled to capacity. Constance herself made a beautiful Duchess of Towers and a wistful dream maiden. No one could wish for a more comely example of manhood than John in his Peter costume and of feminine loveliness than Miss Collier in her dress of white satin and lace. The play ran for two years; the romantic charm and wistfulness of



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the piece was the cause of its wide appeal. It is on record that one woman came to see the play forty-five times. The explanation of this was the war, the wave of tragedy mingled with patriotism that was flooding the country. People who had lost their dear ones wondered if they would ever meet them again in dreams as Peter had met his beloved one.

One of the most beautiful moments of the play is when Peter stands unseen in a corner of the room, watching the Duchess of Towers placing a bunch of violets on the table before she leaves. He recognizes her almost at once as being his childhood sweetheart, whom he has not seen since they played games together and dreamed dreams of the future. In a surge of overwhelming emotion, Peter goes to the table, picks up the violets, drinks in the perfume of memories, and with tears in his eyes whispers ecstatically, "L'amour," as the curtain falls.

On one occasion, when John was saying "L'amour" with all the emotion he could express in his beautiful voice, a man in the upper balcony jeered a loud haw-haw. Barrymore was so furious that he stepped to the footlights, and, looking up at the miscreant, shouted, "If that's how you feel, come down on the stage and let's see if you can do it any better yourself." Not up to the later Barrymore ad lib repartee, but heartfelt just the same.

The curtain came down to dead silence, and then a roar of cheers filled the theater, deafening in its intensity.

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During the Broadway run of *Ibbetson*, John met the woman who was to be his second wife. She had fallen in love with him in the role of Peter. She describes the romance he reawakened in her, in the story of her life, *Who Tells Me True*. “The hypnotic magnetism of success was already reinforcing his natural charm—and I even thought there was in his beauty a fatal kind of fineness, an unearthliness, which you would not but see through tears, because it was not of life, but only as in our secret hearts we dream that life might be. For surely the audience that watched him with their hearts in their throats, could well believe in lovers being able triumphantly to find one another, behind the misfortunes of life, or even its cessation.”

In those sentences is expressed the wild ecstasy of a passionate love. But John, characteristically going to the other extreme, described himself in *Peter Ibbetson* as “a marsh-mallow in a blond wig.”

During the third week of the run of *Ibbetson*, John volunteered for military service, being most anxious to get into the flying corps. He went with his friend Prescott to the recruiting station at Fiftieth Street and Madison Avenue, where all officers had to register for medical examination prior to being sent to Plattsburg. His friend was accepted, but John was refused on account of varicose veins, to his great chagrin. He was silent on his way back to the theater, and with a touch of sadness in his heart he turned to his

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friend and said, "Jack, there's no help for it, you'll have to go to war as my guest."

That same night, after the show, the two Jacks, who contrary to their usual principles had been completely sober for two weeks, under the eagle eye of Ethel, swore that they had been "good" long enough. Making John's rejection for military service the excuse, they decided to go on a binge, and were well mellowed before they ever reached the Astor Hotel. In the days of 1917, one had to climb a wide marble staircase to reach the enormous dining room. As they walked up these stairs, John announced in his best stentorian voice, which could be heard at the far end of the room, "This place is run by Germans, and every darn waiter is a Hun." He would mount a few more steps, and then shout, "This is nothing but a meeting place for spies."

On this night, the very large dining room was practically empty, there being about three waiters to every patron. Barrymore and Prescott seated themselves at a table; a waiter came for their order. John gave the man one look, picked up a plate from the table, and, with a gleam in his eye, lifted it, ready to throw. The scared waiter backed away quickly. "See that coward?" shouted John. "He's a spy—a German spy!" And with that, the plate went hurtling through space, missing the fleeing waiter by a few inches. John was ready for a real night's work. As fast as he could, he picked up plates and hurled them at the few terrified men

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that were left. Soon pandemonium broke loose, and the two miscreants had to duck under tables themselves and fly, to escape being arrested.

A few days later, Prescott received a long mysterious parcel. Upon opening it, he found a beautiful silver-mounted malacca cane. It was from John.

"Whatever made you do such a thing?" asked his friend over the phone a little while later.

"You must have a cane, old boy. You're going to war. All officers use them," came the reply.

It was during the run of *Peter Ibbetson* that John received news from Santa Barbara that Katherine had procured an interlocutory decree for divorce. Ethel made some tart remarks in public about her brother's divorce, and in sympathy for Katherine gave her a part with her in *Déclassée*, one of the biggest successes Ethel ever had.

Two years later the erstwhile Mrs. Barrymore married Alexander D. B. Pratt, but this union also was not successful, and divorce soon followed. In spite of all these unhappy experiences, Katherine married a third time; her new husband was M. Orlowski, secretary to the Polish Legation, who survived her. She died on May 2, 1927, and John, despite the bitter quarrels which they had so often had, was with her at the last. It should be recorded here that when Barrymore was ill, in February 1940, just after he had

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returned to Broadway in *My Dear Children*, Katherine's mother, who is a delightful old lady, was one of the very first to telephone him and wish him a speedy recovery. But to return to *Peter Ibbetson*.

At a hospital benefit performance, John displayed one of his outbreaks of temperament. At the end of the third act comes the biggest dramatic scene, where young Ibbetson kills his villainous old uncle, after an exciting battle. Guests rush in, horrified, but the youthful Peter stands silently over his victim. Absolute silence is necessary to get the dramatic effect. Somebody laughed. John turned on his heel in the middle of the tableau and shouted at the offender, "You would laugh at anything. Ring down the curtain." His orders were obeyed, and when the curtain rose again, he was loudly applauded.

A long tour was booked following the successful Broadway run, and the show was acclaimed everywhere. Hamilton, Ontario, was the scene of another fit of temperament. *Ibbetson* is a play essentially fanciful and visionary; in it there are several dream scenes. In one of these, while waiting execution in his cell, he dreams that he is a little boy again, and he meets his lady love as she was when a little girl. The part of the little boy was always taken by a blond child, for Peter is blond all the way through the play. John was tired of being golden-haired for a whole season, and decided without one word of warning to make his entrance

## "Justice"—"Peter Ibbetson"

on the opening night of the Canadian tour as a dark-haired Peter. When Constance Collier saw him, she almost collapsed. Suddenly the stage manager became frantic; there was no time to get another dream boy. What was to be done? In desperation, someone suggested that they blacken the child's hair immediately. A member of the cast had a few drops of hair dye, someone else had ink; anyway, the poor child made his entrance in the nick of time, with a beautifully plastered head of black hair. (Miss Collier refused to speak to John again for weeks.)

At Kingston, Ontario, John played a trick on Miss Collier. It seemed that whenever he was ready for a good meal, Miss Collier was not. So on this particular evening he was determined to make her eat.

"Are you hungry?" he inquired, as they arrived at the wretchedly cold and dreary station.

"I'm too tired to eat, and I'm not at all hungry."

John thought of a plan. There was a strike on, and no porters were to be had. John called Paul, his valet.

"Paul, I want you to pile up my baggage on the truck. How many pieces have we?"

"Twenty-eight, sir."

"Good. Pile them on, and all Miss Collier's stuff, too. Now, when the thing is full, you and I will pretend to push—only pretend. You understand?"

"Perfectly," said Paul, with a twinkle in his eye.

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John sent Miss Collier's maid on some trivial errand, then called to Constance, "I'm afraid we'll have to push this thing, dear."

Miss Collier willingly lent her aid, in fact, she used the force of a Juggernaut. The actor and his servant just held on. When she was quite exhausted, John thanked her, and announced that he was off to get a good feed. He then disappeared through a doorway, leaving Constance to regain her breath.

As soon as John was out of sight, she sent her maid for a cup of tea and a sandwich. But John had not gone beyond the doorway, and he set up a hoot of laughter. "Oh, you've changed your mind, I see. Don't bother about the tea, we'll have a whacking dinner somewhere." She was too tired to argue.

John's recollection of Kingston, Ontario, is that of living in a hotel where there was only one bathroom to each floor, and of being sustained for a whole week on steak and kidney pie, washed down with tea, and that the only thing to do for amusement was to take a sleigh ride round the lake and admire the insane asylum. He was seen by his valet one morning running across the street clad only in a fur coat, announcing that he had found a bathroom in the house opposite.

Only once on the long tour did they have a really bad house. It was at Philadelphia, on a Wednesday matinee.

## “Justice”—“Peter Ibbetson”

There were eight people in the audience. John went on with the show, but, upon inquiring of the doorman how it was that they had only so few, he was told, “Well, it’s pretty cold inside.”

Miss Collier, recently describing John’s acting in *Ibbetson*, said that in all her experience she had never played with a man who could get through the “overcoat” of the people as he did. There was a certain magnetism in his eyes which hypnotized the audience, and when he had finished the performance his whole system was depleted, because he had given so much of himself. But, she added, he could be very naughty, too.



*SECOND LOVE—"REDEMPTION"—"THE JEST"*

BLANCHIE OELRICHS OF NEWPORT AND NEW YORK, PLAYMATE of duchesses and defender of women's rights, was born to the purple, surrounded with rich relatives and stamped with the family crest of Austrian nobility. As a child, she was brought up in the Catholic Church by a pious and loving mother. Educated under the strict surveillance of nuns, she tried to conform to their rules and precepts, but the desire for romance ran through her youthful head, like a wheel running down a bottomless hill, never reaching its end. She learned about romance from her beautiful sister, who became the Duchess of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, and from the happy couples who walked along the lanes which bordered the Oelrichs' estate. Her thoughts dwelt on the beauty of things, on the poetry of Edgar Allan Poe, and often on the thrilling fascination of the drama.

Named the most beautiful woman in America by the French painter Paul Helleu, who also specialized in black-

## Second Love—"Redemption"—"The Jest"

and-white pen portraits of fair ladies, it is no wonder that her sultans were as plentiful as pebbles on the shore.

When America went into the World War, Blanche was the wife of Leonard M. Thomas, popular American diplomat from Philadelphia. She had married him against her parents' wishes. Their objection was to the disparity in age, Leonard Thomas being many years older than their daughter, who was then eighteen. The marriage brought them two sons, Leonard, Jr., and Robin. The Thomases spent their time hovering about society's watering places, trying to fill up their days with an endless routine of cocktail and dinner parties, gay with chatter and good music. Deceiving themselves into the belief that life was fun, they were, in fact, boundlessly bored.

Blanche's interests turned to writing poetry—to the consternation of her women friends; and to votes for women—to the admiration of the gentlemen.

For her literary work she had chosen the pen name of Michael Strange, which, she states in her autobiography, *Who Tells Me True*, came to her in a sort of vision, and which she appended to her first book of poems. This book met with indifferent success. She little thought at the time of its publication that John Barrymore would be the illustrator of her second volume of verse.

Assuming that no other person can set forth her first meeting with the man she afterward married as well as

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the woman herself, the following is an excerpt from her book in which she describes her first reactions upon meeting the most popular actor of his time:

"I came into a smoke-filled room, where the Theatre Guild Group were entertaining, and noticed, standing in the doorway, handsome Edward Sheldon, dark haired and noble looking with such a rosily polished skin, as if he had just come in from skating. A few minutes later Phil Moeller, one of the Guild's directors, asked me if he might present Mr. Barrymore, who wished to meet me. Here he was, bowing and smiling, looking very slim and nervously poetic, with grayish-green hazel eyes, of immense fascination, because they seemed to mirror back oneself in flattering mischievous terms. He looked elfin and forsaken—an intriguing combination—but very highly strung too. His walk, slanted, oblique, seemed to say that his clothes irked his skin."

Blanche had taken Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree (at whose party in London *Peter Ibbetson* had first been discussed) to see John in the part of Peter, and she speaks of this characterization as "the radiant lyrical approximation of Romance."

Her husband was in the war in France. She had packed up her children and gone with them first to Lakewood, to seek solace in the pines, and inspiration for her poems, and then to her house in Newport, on the edge of the cliffs. But still she was unhappy. Blanche felt more and more the

## Second Love—"Redemption"—"The Jest"

inescapable call to the stage, and the urging voice of her conscience bade her do something about it. She had thrilled to John's superb acting of Falder in *Justice*, and had been swept off her feet by his charm and sincerity in *Peter Ibbetson*. She never went to theatrical parties without meeting him. One can well understand the mutual attraction of two such enthusiasts of the arts. It was not surprising that this admiration should culminate in marriage. But John had much work to do before he became a husband for the second time.

He was living at this time in a studio, or "garret" as he preferred to call it, at 132 East Fourth Street, Greenwich Village, when he first found himself interested in Blanche Oelrichs Thomas. Sharing his garret was his friend Ned Sheldon. The place expressed the Bohemianism that is part of the Barrymore make-up. It was on the top floor of a house overlooking Washington Square. Decorated in Florentine fashion, the studio seemed to breathe an atmosphere mysterious and golden, as if a silent muse were watching over the fates of the two men who lived there. Perhaps John was influenced by the setting of the play that he was planning to do later with Lionel (the one they had discovered in Paris). It was to be called *The Jest*, and took place in fifteenth-century Florence. Be that as it may, the studio was just what one would expect as a background for two such people as John and Edward Sheldon.

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There was a roof garden, decorated with Venetian antiques; apple trees were actually growing—John had planted them himself. An old ship model hung from the ceiling, rare books were piled high about the room. The only incongruous note was a collection of scripts left by hopeful authors, together with a thousand and one letters, some read, many unopened and waiting for their recipient to be in the mood to digest them. Sometimes John would go temperamental and give orders to his colored valet, Paul Lightburne, to burn all the accumulated correspondence, read or unread. But John's books have always been a great joy to him. He declares he derived his love of reading from his father, who was a man of deep culture. He likes to read aloud to anyone who will listen intelligently. Elsie Janis, who says that Jack Barrymore was her first and only love, used to listen to his reading for hours on end. *The Ancient Mariner* was his favorite at that time, with its beautiful illustrations by Doré. He was more proud of owning several priceless first editions than of any other of his possessions. He says, "A woman is only a woman, but a book, and especially a fine first edition, bound in calf—ah, that is a voluptuous pleasure."

Sometimes, in his Florentine surroundings, he would gaze into the fire—the studio had a large fireplace—and on chilly evenings muse upon what really caused the green flame from the driftwood, which flickered so fantastically. Was it the

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impregnation of years of the salt sea? Or was it distressed souls needing prayers in Davy Jones's Locker?

John's favorite book now is *Huckleberry Finn*, because it reminds him of his own youth. He used to go to a tumble-down cottage in Staten Island, with Lionel and Ethel, and with only a lovable old negro, whom they dubbed Edward the Black Prince, to look after them. There was no face washing, no making of beds, and, best of all, there were thirty-five dogs. The mother and father of these animals were given to the Barrymores by Commander Peary after his Arctic expedition, and the canine family seemed to have "just grown."

In summer Barrymore and his friend would sit in their roof garden (having wound up the quaint mechanical bird which warbled melodiously in its beautiful old cage and having also, by an ingenious device, cut off all incoming telephone calls), and imagine they were away out in the country, smelling apple blossoms and listening to the call of the birds. When evening came, they lit their studio solely by candles, which were placed in front of the blue glass windows and which must have supplied a feast of color to Mrs. Whitney, whose studio was next to theirs.

After a laborious search for a worth-while play, Mr. Arthur Hopkins decided to produce a dramatized version of Tolstoy's book, *The Living Corpse*. He would have no one in the part of Fedya but John Barrymore. The great

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trouble that faced Mr. Hopkins was to get a translator. In discussing their many plans, John happened to mention that he had a friend who knew the sister of Jo Davidson, the famous sculptor, who could obtain from her a literal translation. John sang the literary praises of Michael Strange (the friend), and Mr. Hopkins was enchanted with the idea. She was commissioned to do the translation. Here was something worth while, and she took the matter seriously in hand. She could be seen night after night, leaving her apartment at the Ritz bound for Greenwich Village and the Russian Inn, armed with books, notes, and pencils. To Mr. Hopkins she reported almost daily on the progress she was making.

After many conferences, it was decided by Mr. Hopkins to change the title from *The Living Corpse* to *Redemption*, in order to clarify for the public the meaning of the drama.

One may well ask why Michael was taking so much interest in John, when she already had a husband from whom she was neither separated nor divorced. The answer is simple. When John realized how much Michael meant to him, he made a point of explaining the situation to Leonard Thomas. Naturally, the husband was angry, but there were no scenes. Each man declared that it was only Michael's happiness he sought. So John made a bargain. He would not see her for six months, and at the end of that time Michael was to make her choice. The fall of 1917 concluded

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the specified time, just as Mr. Hopkins had made his decision to have Tolstoy's work translated—and John won.

This posthumous autobiographical masterpiece of the most powerful of the Russians had never reached this country, with the exception of a minor Yiddish presentation and a German performance, and yet it had held first place in Continental theaters since 1911 (a year after Tolstoy's death), with the role of Fedya played by all the greatest actors in Europe. But in Mr. Hopkins' opinion no one had yet played the part so wonderfully as Alexander Moissi, the German actor, who along with his director, Max Reinhardt, has become a world-recognized artist.

After working all through a hot summer on the translation, Michael Strange had *Redemption* in good shape, and rehearsals were started. The news ran around Broadway that Arthur Hopkins was busy with another of his crazy ideas. Barrymore thinks that Mr. Hopkins is one of the shrewdest producers and directors in New York. "He takes the empty shell of a play and gives it blood, and nerves, and a voice to utter moving speech. I found him to be one of the most amazing and interesting people in the American theater. Sometimes he is very inarticulate and will look at a person before he speaks for a full minute without even blinking. He's got a remarkable humanity in him and is the kind of man who has faith in the fellows that everyone else calls fools. When he directs a play, he hands out each actor



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his part and then lets him read it as he feels it. He often sits in the wings waiting until the act is over and then makes his comments. He says all that needs to be said, and he has illimitable patience. He gives a fellow a chance to think; in fact, he picks his artists on account of the *way* they think, for it is his opinion that acting becomes automatic if you feel like the men you are playing."

*Redemption* was a heavy drama, but people responded to it. The play was written around the aristocratic life of Moscow, ten years before the Russian revolution. It was the story of an artistic weakling who gets himself so involved in the marriage and divorce laws of the country that he is driven finally to suicide. The whole intention of the play was to show that a man can gain his greatest strength in the depths of degradation.

Where to get the correct Russian songs? A general search was made of the music libraries. Nothing was forthcoming. Mr. Hopkins was almost in despair; it was much more difficult than anyone had anticipated to collect the proper musical background in wartime New York. Mr. Hopkins sent for Maurice Nitke, Russian violinist, to ask his help. Here at last was light on the subject, for Nitke knew that the Russian Cathedral quartet was available, and that Alexander Ivanoff, leader of the balalaika orchestra, and Sunia Samuels of the same organization and a few of their players were in the city because of the war. There could not have

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been more authentic music had the play been put on in Petrograd. The beautiful singing and its accompaniment provided almost an operatic background.

The last dress rehearsal was over, and everyone was in that state of nervous excitement which is so necessary for a good performance on opening night. The great hour arrived, and Michael sat anxiously somewhere in the gallery, completely ignoring the belief John had in his stars. His horoscope shows him to be a Sagittarius ascendant; therefore, bound for success. Mysticism and astrology have always had a decided influence on John. He has often consulted the stars for a propitious time in which to start on a new production. Again they did not fail him.

Barrymore was supreme in the part. The moment he made his entrance one felt a sort of electric shock, a knowledge that one was in the presence of a very great actor. His performance proved him to be first in his profession. He had acquired a slight Russian-Jewish accent as cleverly as the faint cockney twang in *Justice*.

There is a charming story connected with this play and an old actress, Zeffie Tilbury, descendant of a noted stage family. She knew the Barrymores well, and was a great friend of Georgie Drew's. Zeffie tells of John's thoughtfulness to her on the opening night of *Redemption*. She was in the show, and when the cast was assembled to take its bow, John noticed that Zeffie was not on hand. She had

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gone to her dressing room and had changed to her street clothes, not considering her part important enough to be acknowledged. John sent for her, and she came just as the curtain was about to rise.

"Come along, Zeffie," he called out. "It doesn't matter about your street clothes, come and take a bow." She did so, and he gave her a big hug in full view of the audience. Some years later, she appeared again with John in a bit part in the movie *Marie Antoinette*. She and John love to talk about his grandmother, and how, when she was actress-manager of the Arch Street Theatre in Philadelphia, her actors called her "The Duchess," because she ruled them with a rod of iron. This grandmother was a wonderful woman, and many a time the family exchequer would have been in a bad way but for her. Among John's most prized possessions is a letter which Abraham Lincoln sent to her after witnessing her performance in *The Rivals*.

John learned one night, during the run of *Redemption*, to be wary of foreign dramatists, or any of their relatives. A special matinee performance was given in honor of Count Ilya Tolstoy, son of the novelist, and a few other distinguished guests. John never gave so much of himself to the part, and his depiction of the slow degradation of this tragic youth Fedya was poignantly affecting. Naturally, the count wished to meet the man who had brought one of his father's greatest characters to life. He was taken to the dressing

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room. The actor was weak, and covered with perspiration from his great efforts. Introductions were made, smiles and bows were exchanged, but the only comment the count made was, "You don't wear a beard, do you? Nor do any of the other gentlemen in the cast. That is not correct, you know. All Russians wear beards."

Another *bête noire* of John's—namely, the idiot who laughs in the wrong place—was in front one night. The actor had come to his deathbed scene when this offkey laugh was heard. Barrymore was furious. "Better death," he gritted between his teeth, as he lay prostrate on the floor, "than to live in this world with a lot of God-damned fools."

Mr. Hopkins took off *Redemption* when it was doing capacity business (for which he was greatly criticized), because he wanted John to do another play, namely *The Jest*, written by Captain Sem Benelli, a war hero, then on the Italian front, recovering from his wounds. A literal translation was made by Luigi Vaiani and Lawrence Dickey from the original Italian, although it was Ned Sheldon once again who had arranged the final script. Mr. Benelli describes his own play as "a token of this our time in the arts of poet and the playwright, which Mr. Sheldon and Mr. Barrymore in their adaptation have embroidered upon."

Mr. Hopkins wished to bring back Lionel again, who had left the boards after *Peter Ibbetson* to direct Ethel in Metro-de-Luxe motion-picture productions. Lionel signed up for

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the part of Neri with the Hopkins management, because Lionel was glad to take a rest from directing pictures. Neri was not a swashbuckling hero part. Lionel likes those roles that *create* character through the medium of acting. When John and he had first come across the Italian play, it was he who saw the wonderful study that could be made of the coarse, brutal, soulless creature that tyrannized over everyone with whom he came in contact. Mr. Hopkins, having signed up his leading actors, now sought a worthy designer for the sets and costumes.

It is at this point that Robert Edmond Jones comes into the story. Arthur Hopkins and he had surprised New York audiences by their unusual mounting of *Macbeth*. It was Mr. Jones who first brought the theory of unconscious projection in production to New York. Here was a new art which developed rapidly and gave to the American theater an altogether new technique. Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Jones agreed that conferences should be held between the actors and the scenic designer, so that in a body they could throw in their ideas, while the artist, gathering and sifting, would form a perfect pattern.

The conferences were many, and when the three disciples of sensitivity, art, and intelligence got together over a studio worktable, the walls resounded with suggestions that bounced back and forth like ping-pong balls in a tournament game.

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Rehearsals commenced, John working all day on *The Jest* and playing *Redemption* at night. All the time rehearsals were going on, the attraction between John and Michael Strange was growing stronger and stronger. John would disappear from the stage the very moment a test was called, and would invariably be found in the stage doorman's den telephoning Michael, for he could never remember which hostess had won the nightly battle of the season; that is, the capturing of John and Michael as guests for supper.

Naturally, Michael took the keenest interest in this production, and was often in on the conferences flinging in her ideas like jewels on an embroidered background. John was doing exquisite drawings at this time for Michael, and sending her unusual, lovely gifts from Cartier's.

These were wonderful days for Barrymore; life was full, brimful, of work and love and achievement. He was going into a period play wherein he could revel; costumes—the most beautiful imaginable—which he could change for every entrance. So disarmingly attractive did he look in them that the audience failed to notice that there was no logical reason whatever for him to have substituted one garb for another.

Money was not taken into consideration; there were seven hundred dollars' worth of real mink on the collar of one of John's capes alone. Maurice Nitke tells of the tussle he used to have with John during the music rehearsals of *The Jest*.

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John, who had a song to sing, always insisted that Nitke, who was conducting, should lead him, instead of following him with the accompaniment. This same contretemps took place at every rehearsal, until John, finding he was not getting his way, threatened to throw things at the conductor. But after their worst battle, Barrymore would ask him to come up on the stage, then he would put his arms round Nitke's neck, and say, "Maurice, you old so-and-so, come along and we'll drown our sorrows"—and they would go out laughing together. In this play John helped Louis Wolheim get his real start. Until now he had only carried a spear. Jed Harris, John, and Louis used to spend hours reminiscing at Gilhooley's saloon at Eighth Avenue and Fifty-first Street.

*The Jest* made its American debut in 1919 at the Plymouth Theatre and proved to be the most sensational dramatic success New York had had in many years. Its presentation brought Mr. Hopkins into the front rank among producers. Within ten weeks the play grossed over \$180,000. Delighted as Mr. Hopkins always was by the success of the plays which he believed good enough to produce, the superlative hit that he had scored with *The Jest* still did not make him alter his plan to allow the play only a definite, limited run.

Great praise was also given to Robert Edmond Jones for the design of the beautiful settings. The dungeon, incarnated in one huge, thickly shadowed pillar, the one to which Neri





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is chained, speaks of the damp and fetid cell, and the luminous sky suggests the sumptuous life of Geneva (played to perfection by Maude Hannaford), especially when the madrigal floats to her window in an interval as she indulges her fancies. The form and color of the settings and the beauty of the costumes seemed to accent the wickedness of the deeds. John considers D'Annunzio's *Francesca da Rimini* the only rival to the poetry of *The Jest*. At times one sensed something deeper than the mere witnessing of a scene; there was a suggestion of the atmosphere of a cathedral. John wore a short cloak, his flaming red hair curled back from his wide forehead, his young aesthetic face at times tragically like a self portrait of the youthful Michelangelo.

And yet, with the knowledge that he was bringing a beautiful message to the world in this play, he describes himself as wearing Kelly-green tights and says that while the spinsters in the audience gurgled at him he felt like a sweet-scented jackass, with hair that resembled ivy, which made him look as if he had lived for centuries in ruined castles.

For two seasons previously Lionel had played Milt Shanks, a bent old soldier in *The Copperhead*, but here was indeed a metamorphosis. In *The Jest* he played the role of Neri, a powerful, ruthless, drunken mercenary, a great muscular fellow who could carry six soldiers on his back while they

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struggled to bind him. Hopkins thinks as much of Lionel as he does of John, and considers them both not only wonderful actors but also connoisseurs of art, music, painting, and sculpture.

It was a sparkling opening night. Everyone who was anyone was there to enjoy or to criticize, according to the whim of the individual. The Italian embassy was well represented, this being the American première of an Italian play. It had been played in other countries, notably France and Italy, and in each of those productions John's part had been played by a woman. In the translation from the original Benelli script, there had been so many alterations and adjustments (the play was originally written in verse), that when John heard there was a possibility of the author coming to the United States to see the American version, he yelled out, "God forbid," remembering his experience with Count Tolstoy.

There never was a show in which Barrymore appeared that did not have its ad lib story. There had been a regular epidemic of colds and influenza during the winter of *The Jest*, and the theater was always full of coughers. John had stood the "barking" for nearly a week, but at last it was getting him. Having a prayer to recite in the play, he interpolated one for "the trained seals in the audience."

Regardless of the record-breaking business, it was decided

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to close the show, in accordance with a prearranged plan which called for a new production, starring John.

Another pleasant bit of evidence that the theater is not always slavishly commercial may be recalled in connection with Lee Shubert. When Lionel was acting Milt Shanks in *The Copperhead*, John was playing in *Peter Ibbetson*. John decided he must see Lionel's opening in *The Copperhead*. So that Mr. Lee Shubert should suffer no financial loss when John decided not to play for one night, he bought out the entire house and told Mr. Shubert to deduct the amount from his salary. When John opened his pay envelope on Saturday, he found the full amount. John reminded Mr. Shubert about the deduction.

"Forget about it," said Mr. Lee. "I had a brother once; I was very fond of him." (Sam Shubert had been killed in a train wreck.)

John left *The Jest* a few weeks before it closed, to go to London to discuss plans for another play which Hopkins was to produce for him. During his absence, the role of Gianetto was played by Gilda Varesi, who had been acting the part of the blind woman in the production. The play that was being planned for John was Shakespeare's *Richard III*. Naturally, this great production had been in preparation for months, but John will tell you that he and Ned Sheldon got the idea one day at the zoo, looking at a red tarantula with a gray bald spot on his back.

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"Why look, Ned," said John, "there is the personification of crawling power."

"Particularly sinister and evil looking," agreed Ned.

John peered at the ugly creature again.

"Looks just like Richard the Third."

"So it does, and there's an idea, John," suggested Ned quickly. "Why don't you play that part?"

"Marvelous. I hadn't thought about it. Maybe I will."

That's how it all began.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### *SECOND MARRIAGE—"RICHARD III"*

TOWARD THE END OF SUMMER 1920—AUGUST 15, TO BE exact—John married Blanche Thomas, or Michael Strange, as she prefers to be called. She had broken the news to Leonard Thomas, of her intended marriage to John, when he was home on leave from France. Once again a bride was warned by her family that the marriage would not be a happy one. But Michael had always been headstrong and had always managed to have her own way. She was certainly not going to change now; the same sentiments as those shared by Katherine, her predecessor. There is a curious coincidence anent the birth of both John's first and second wives. The same doctor who had brought golden-haired Katherine Harris into the world had, within the hour, been called to attend the birth of another baby—Blanche Oelrichs, now the second Mrs. Barrymore, a dark-haired beauty.

The wedding took place in a flower-bedecked room at the apartment of Mrs. John McCulloch, at the Ritz-Carlton



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in New York, Michael giving her residence as the Colony Club. Lionel, of course, was best man. (He was becoming quite an expert.) Once again an angry father refused to attend the ceremony, preferring to remain quietly at home in Newport.

Everyone was speculating as to how these two ultra-temperamental people would get on, and all the wiseacres shook their heads solemnly. Well, at least John had his sketching, which seemed wholly to absorb him, when other things became too trying for his nerves. Michael had her writing, into which she was able to put any emotions to which she was not giving full vent at the moment.

John now lived the life of a country gentleman of leisure, for many months on end. He had bought and presented to the new Mrs. Barrymore a charming little house, on Buckhout Road, White Plains, and divided his time between taking Michael abroad and turning the little house with its surrounding acres into a delightful fourteenth-century studio, both ornate and sentimental. The lilacs in spring were so plentiful that they could be cut down and taken away in cartloads.

Michael made the garden into a little paradise. "So lovely, that at sunrise she could walk up and down gathering flowers at will, and sing heavenly, like an angel," as did Chaucer's Emily in *The Knight's Tale*.

Many happy hours they spent buying period pieces and

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superintending alterations. When John got tired of being domestic, he would disappear. But he would not go very far. Usually he could be found in a huge silolike tower on the grounds, reading, or indulging in an exchange of reminiscences with one of the "boys" he had brought back from town with him. Often he was in his castle, away from everything, when Michael was under the impression that he was attending to business in New York.

John had bought the house for a song, but by the time the newlyweds had finished with it (having removed the ceiling entirely from the living room, so that it stretched right up to the roof and having torn old beams, whole, out of the barn and transplanted them all over the house), they wouldn't have sold the place for fifty times what they had paid for it.

Barrymore also had some good furniture in the store-room at the Ambassador Hotel, in case he wanted to stay in town for any length of time. A suite on the Park Avenue side was kept more or less in reserve for him. When they were informed of his coming, his own stuff was brought up, which included a whole series of hand-painted pictures of fish—and Jack was quite at home.

The couple spent some time at White Sulphur Springs, Virginia, where John used to recite *Richard III* in the woods for days on end. Soon he knew the whole play by heart, but when he recited it he knew that his voice was far from

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perfect. It had a high, nasal tone, which bothered him dreadfully. Michael knew Mrs. Margaret Carrington, a sister of Walter Huston, and now Mrs. Robert Edmond Jones, who knew more about voice than anyone else she had ever met. Barrymore made her acquaintance, and she eagerly accepted him as a pupil. They studied Shakespeare together, and she gave John an entirely new vocal quality. Instead of ranting in a loud voice of the atrocities Richard had performed (a little matter of carrying the head of a man he had just killed), she trained him to speak the lines naturally, with only a faint vein of sarcasm and irony underlying the words, as a man of that caliber *would* express himself. No ranting or raving, only a beautiful musical intonation. This intensive study went on for three months, the two working for five or six hours at a time.

Arthur Hopkins and Robert Edmond Jones had been working together during the entire summer and had spent a great deal of time on research work in England, assembling costumes, having conferences on scenery, and getting together armor (which was promptly stolen as soon as it had reached a warehouse in New York). When the production finally opened, the critics did not know which to give most praise to: the unusually fine performance, the producer, or the scenic designer.

On opening night, the final curtain came down at 1:30 A.M. No one had stirred until the very end. The audience

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had also been entertained during the intervals by the arrival of various members of the Barrymore clan, who were appearing in different plays, within a few blocks of one another. They had previously made a futile attempt to see their youngest member at the final dress rehearsal and had taken pains to arrive in full force at a specified time, to find the entire cast in costume, working hard, and John nowhere to be found—the stage manager reading his part for him.

There are two factions of opinion regarding the superiority of John's Richard III and his Hamlet. Many considered him to be the finest Richard III of all time; others, his Hamlet to be best. Michael belongs to the former category, and so does Whitford Kane, who describes the malevolence of Barrymore's Richard as "that of a rusty knife twisted in an old wound and fiendishly pulled out." Mr. Jones, when asked recently of his opinion of John's two great Shakespearean roles, shook his head sadly and spoke of the actor as if he were remembering one who has passed. His admiration for those two performances had at the time almost amounted to worship. "There never has been such a great actor at any time, there never has been such shattering beauty in art, as there was in John Barrymore's." This indeed was great praise from Mr. Jones, who is not given to eulogizing. "But," he added, "this publicity, this cheap sensationalism that the newspapers have surrounded him with in the sunset of his life, well—it's a pity."

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In one scene in *Richard III*, John wore a specially constructed suit of copper armor with innumerable joints, which weighed heavily. Barrymore, wearing this, executed a most amazing fall backward, like the one Nijinski did in *Scheherazade*. It made people gasp, and was indeed a feat of stagecraft which astonished even the critics.

The following is an excerpt from an article by Alexander Woollcott, which speaks eloquently of our greatest actor's rise to fame: "'Richard III' at the Plymouth Theatre, Barrymore's first Shakespearean role, marks a measurable advance in the gradual process of bringing his technical fluency abreast with his winged imagination, and his real genius for the theatre. The highest point has been reached in the rapid, unexpected ascent which began four years ago, a rise which has been unparalleled in the theatre of our time." And all this before *Hamlet*, which was to be John's crowning achievement, and of which the same critic said: "As one who has seen all the Hamlets in this country the last twenty-five years, I must report that this new one is the finest of them all."

Mr. Hopkins' own description of John's performance is conveyed in one pithy sentence. "Here was exaltation, a brief dazzling sojourn in the high heaven of emotion." This production was a version compiled by Ned Sheldon from the third part of Shakespeare's *Henry VI*, and from *Richard III*, beginning with the first scene of the former, which brings

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Richard upon the stage, ten years before the death scene at the end of *Henry VI*, which in most acting versions marks the beginning of the evil king's play. History tells us that Richard died at thirty-three, but Shakespeare lets us follow him until he should be about forty. The result is a much wider scope for Barrymore, of which he made ample use. Mr. Kenneth MacGowan, then critic on the *New York Globe*, and now director for Twentieth-Century Fox in Hollywood, considered John's Richard the finest moment in the American theater. On opening night, the play did not end until one o'clock, but commuters and everybody else remained to cheer and applaud.

The coloring of this beautiful production blended in with the mood of its sinister chief character. Black armor was worn in the scene where, as Duke of Gloucester, he urges the Duke of York to the revolt which ended at Tewkesbury. Then, when sitting upon the throne, meditating upon the death of the little princes, Richard wore scarlet and gold lined with silver; and later, blood red but contrasted with black, against the grayness of the stone walls of the Tower of London, as the funeral of Lady Anne's husband passes, the husband whom he has had killed to free her for himself.

John in speaking of Richard says, "People like this man, because he is on the level with his iniquity; the audience is his only confidant, and that is the secret of the play's success." Gilbert Gabriel, drama critic, wrote of John's quiet

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characterization of a role which "others have held to be a valve of all manner of oratorical steam and battlefield gestures."

What a contrast to Mansfield's Richard III, to quote Mr. Towse, drama critic of the New York *Evening Post*, at the time: "He [Mansfield] wore a hump like a camel, and tottered in a manner totally inconsistent with the strength and agility which the Usurper was known to have been possessed. He passed his sword through the body of his victim with the nonchalance of a poulterer skewering a fowl. He failed utterly to suggest the energy of the direful will below the icy surface." It was this dark power that Barrymore interpreted so expertly.

Again, the Plymouth Theatre was playing to colossal business, and had to close, but this time it was on account of illness. John had a complete nervous breakdown, brought on chiefly by overstudy. He had rehearsed *The Jest* while playing in *Redemption*; then, while acting that strenuous role in *The Jest*, he was not only studying Richard, but also doing that exacting movie *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* for Paramount Artcraft during the day. The picture was just completed as rehearsals started for *Richard III*. Human endurance will stand so much and no more, as we all know. Complete rest became necessary; the weight of that heavy black armor was in itself as much as any human being could stand. The heat

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played upon it from the spots and footlights became so intolerable that on one occasion a hose of cold water had to be turned upon it after the curtain before John's dresser could remove the armor.

William Muldoon was John's manager at that time, and an expert on physical fitness. He ran a sanitarium near White Plains. To this establishment John was packed off, and, under the care of Muldoon, underwent a strict rest cure—if walking five miles a day while the boss rode on horseback beside him and criticized his method of walking may be called by such a name. The system consisted principally of being meek and obedient. Barrymore, instead of going to bed at daybreak, milked the cows before breakfast—seven o'clock God's time, not daylight saving. A shower followed this; then donning a gym suit, he played with the medicine balls, one light and one heavy; then breakfast, rest two hours, followed by light luncheon. Smoking and drinking being forbidden, John used to spend the afternoons calling up his friends on the phone, a procedure also strictly forbidden by Simon Legree Muldoon.

Meanwhile Michael Strange and her two sons, the Thomas boys, Leonard, and Robin, were living in a charming house on Sixty-seventh Street in New York. She was writing a play for her husband. It was to be a sort of dramatic fantasy which she called *Clair de Lune*, and which she freely admits



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was founded upon Victor Hugo's *L'Homme Qui Rit*. When John returned from Hollywood, he was met by his wife, who could scarcely wait until they reached home to tell him of her latest accomplishment. His verdict upon reading the play was distinctly favorable.

Within a short time, Frohman had decided to present it at the Empire Theatre. Robert Edmond Jones was to do the settings, which turned out to be exquisitely fantastic, and John himself was to play Gwymplane the Clown. Not only was John to be in it, but Ethel also, who was to play Queen Anne, described in the script as a sharp-featured, neurotic-looking woman. She wore magnificent costumes and enormous headdresses, and was surrounded by queer dumplings of Lady's maids. Violet Kemble Cooper acted the Duchess and played opposite John. Dennis King made his New York debut in this cast. During part of the play, Barrymore had to conceal his features under a mask, for as a child, the story goes, he had been stolen by mummers, who had slashed his mouth so cruelly that he was too hideous to behold.

His whole figure was hidden completely by a hood and cloak; only his sensitive hands were in view. He made his first entrance doing somersaults. The script called for Gwymplane to do a weird and difficult dance. So John, with his amazing enthusiasm, took ballet lessons every day from Maurice Kosloff, the excellent Russian dancing teacher, until he could execute a triple entrechat in a faultless manner—

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an extraordinary feat for an actor who had not danced on the stage since 1908, and then only in musical comedy. The trouble here was that during the *divertissement* in *Clair de Lune* he had to wear a mask, so that there was nothing to prove to the audience that the dancer was really John.

No husband could have been more enthusiastic over his wife's brain child. Michael had even composed some of the score, and nothing was left untried to make the play a success. John now, looking back, says that he would describe *Clair de Lune* as bedecked with everything but the kitchen stove; it was simply a conglomeration of dwarfs and Barrymores.

Meanwhile, John was in a state of excited anticipation, and when Michael Strange presented him with a daughter in May 1921, John was the happiest of fathers. She was a lovely baby, and was christened Diana Barrymore Blythe.

A few months after Diana was born, the Barrymores went on a summer vacation to Europe, and posed on board ship for the news photographers, looking a very happy pair. But on October 11 Mrs. Barrymore returned to New York alone. She said that John was busy in London, talking about contracts. He did return a month later, but took up separate living quarters.

The days he spent with Diana during the next years could almost be counted on the fingers. She lived a great deal with her grandparents, the Oelrichs, at Newport. John

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visited her at a boarding school in Baltimore, and once took her and a party of school friends to a night club in New York. One can imagine the excitement of the young ladies in question, being the guests of John Barrymore, the handsomest man in the movies! Then, again, when her father was taking a cruise in his luxury yacht, the *Infanta*, Diana went along with him. She was fourteen.

Her father values a letter she wrote to him when she was twelve years old, in which she says that she has seen him on the screen in all his pictures, but the only ones she liked were *Topaze* and *The Bill of Divorcement*, also asking him why he did not act more like Fredric March. John was so delighted with this that he showed the letter to Mr. March, who sent her a large autographed picture of himself in appreciation.

Diana's next meeting with her illustrious parent was in 1939 in Chicago, where they both happened to be playing. There was a great deal of publicity around this greeting of father and daughter. John told reporters, "I worked like hell in *Richard III* and in *Hamlet*, but this daughter of mine is the finest thing I ever produced."

But to return to *Clair de Lune*. All society turned out once again for the opening. Socially, it was one of the biggest nights of the season; dramatically, one of the biggest flops. One critic described it neatly when he said, "You could

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not see the play for Barrymores. All New York was on hand. Too bad it will not come back at subsequent performances." John did everything to bolster the sick play, but it did not last long. This was in 1921. Even then he was master of the art of ad libbing, and not even the texture of this play, gossamer as it was, could stop his unbridled sense of humor. There happened to be a building under construction next to the Empire Theatre, and when on one occasion the noise became intolerably loud, he remarked to the audience, "Ah, the Germans are bombarding Paris again."

On another occasion, during the excavation, John had come to the touching scene where he whispers his love to the little blind girl Dea, who is dying. "Can you hear me, Dea, can you hear me?" At that moment, a minor explosion boomed at the back, where the work was going on, and John ad libbed, "How the hell can you hear me anyway!" Poor Mary Carroll, who played the part of the blind girl so charmingly, was always the victim of John's caprices, perhaps because she was so childlike in her simple white dress, which fell to her ankles, and with the wild flowers in her hair. His great joy was to tickle her as she lay dying, and when it is recorded that the play at this point was so touchingly beautiful that the very stagehands have been known to weep, it can well be understood why Constance Collier summed the whole situation of John's whims in six words: "He can be

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very naughty, too." Mary Carroll tells how the whole cast took their mood from John. Sometimes he would be facetious and rush through the show, another day he would be tense and emotional, and so therefore would the rest of the company. But taken as a whole, John was on his very best behavior through the run, and he and Michael appeared to be happy. There is no doubt that Barrymore had great faith in *Clair de Lune*, even though he spoke lightly of it, and he tried unsuccessfully to get Constance Collier to produce it in London.

One of the speeches Michael wrote for her husband to say seems strangely prophetic, for this marriage, too, was not to last long. Gwymplane says to the Duchess, who thinks she loves him, "Ah, Madame, I am weary of your commands. Over my actions you have a certain power, but, as my mind and what shall come out of it is still mysterious to me, I am afraid you must share the discomfort of my own ignorance"—which very nearly sums up the Michael Strange-Barrymore affair.

Much as John had wished success for his wife's play, he was not very depressed by its failure, inasmuch as he was personally concerned. His wife soon found out that his occupation as an artist, working away in his own room, sketching the conceptions that crowded into his imagination, completely satisfied his urge for expression. It was a kind of fulfillment which his great gift as actor never seems to

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have afforded him. Perhaps this diversion of intensities was the precursor of the quarrels that were to follow. They went to Paris, and lived in a luxuriously furnished apartment near the Seine, which had been lent to them by a friend. They were entertained, wined, and dined. But it was inevitable that two such dynamic personalities could not live together for long in peace and harmony. A mutual threat of suicide kept them both in a continual state of nervous tension, John having had to act dead so often for art's sake that his realism became terrifying when done in real life.

They left Paris and went to St. Moritz. But not matter where they were, their separate egos could not harmonize. Michael and one of her friends went on a walking tour into Italy, and left John free to cross the Alps, if he so wished. One of the most exciting adventures of his life was the climbing of Mont Blanc, on September 2, 1921, for which he received a medal, and a torn ligament in his hand. His third wife, Dolores, used to tease him about this and say it was caused by cracking ice.

During Michael's sojourn in Venice, she fell in love with a charming young poet. The situation between her and John was becoming quite intolerable. Both of them had ceased to find any satisfaction in the continual cataclysmic outbursts of temperament, egotism, or what you will. John had a picture to do in London, *Sherlock Holmes* (which turned out to be one of his very finest), and so solved his immediate

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problem, while Michael decided that she wanted to sail for home.

John describes his second marriage in one sentence. "Michael Strange is a dynamic poet; we are exactly alike in many respects—those respects separated us." Even Diana could not bind them together.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### *HAMLET AT HOME*

WHILE IN LONDON, BARRYMORE WAS INVITED TO SUPPER BY the greatest Russian director, Constantin Stanislavski, in his little two-room apartment. John was much impressed by this venerable patriarch of the Moscow Art Theatre, and asked him, among other things, how he selected his artists. Our future Hamlet had not had the good fortune to work under the great master, and was eager to know his method of setting free the powers of the actor.

"Of course, I will show you how I select my new actors," said Stanislavski, and picking up a pin which chanced to be stuck in the tablecloth, he held it up. "I choose them by means of this."

John was beginning to wonder whether it was Stanislavski or himself who was going a bit peculiar.

"Don't look so surprised, my friend," the Russian continued. "You will understand in a minute. See this pin?"

His astonished guest nodded.



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"I will hide it. You—come and find it. You go into the next room."

Barrymore did as he was asked. "You may come in now," said Stanislavski. "Please look for the pin."

The great Russian watched him, as he picked up the glasses from the table, and looked under them, and lifted each plate. He felt with his hand all along the surface of the tablecloth, then lifted the corner which hung down where his host was sitting. There the pin was. John held it up, still wondering who was crazy.

Stanislavski clapped his hands, and shouted, "Very good—you are engaged!" And then he explained. "I can tell a real actor by the way he looks for a pin. If he prances around the room, striking attitudes, pretending to think very hard, looking in ridiculous places—in other words, exaggerating, then he is no good. Do you understand, my friend?"

John has never forgotten that lesson.

By spring 1922 he was back in the United States, working for First National Pictures. He did *The Lotus Eaters*, a classic of the silents. Colleen Moore played opposite him. Each wore a kind of toga, with a Greek key pattern for the border, and Colleen's hair hung in long straggly strands down her back. The condition of her hair was not to be wondered at, considering the hardships the whole cast were to suffer.

The location was Miami, Florida. A boat called the

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*Virginia Bee* was chartered, and the entire cast and personnel went four miles out to sea. They started shooting, and all went well for a while, but, gradually, each individual took on a greenish aspect. Soon there was no one standing on his feet but John Barrymore. He astonished everyone by his complete indifference to *mal de mer*, until he revealed the secret: He had taken special precaution, and had eaten nothing the night before. Prostration was only the beginning of their troubles. To their distress and exasperation, for they were all gradually getting burned up with the intense heat, the captain of the *Virginia Bee* announced that the vessel was stuck on a sand bar. The studio received the news by radio and sent an airplane for John. Naturally he insisted upon remaining with the others.

"But if you've got any New York papers, for the love o' Mike drop them down," shouted John, as he watched the silver bird make off for freedom. At the completion of this picture, he played for Paramount in *Here Comes the Bride*.

Everything was now ready to start rehearsals for *Hamlet*. There was naturally a great deal of excitement on everyone's part, none more so than in John himself. His weeks and weeks of studying brought forth fruit, for when everyone was gathered together it was found that he was the only member of the cast to be word perfect at the first rehearsal. Something unheard of! Perfection was his aim. He thought

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Hamlet, lived Hamlet, made Hamlet the center of his consciousness.

Always ready to help a fellow artist, if one of the cast said his lines in a way John felt was not right, he would not say a word at rehearsal—after all he was not the director—but he would call the actor afterward into his dressing room and would rehearse with him until he had reached perfection. John was always trying out new effects, finding new colors for lights. He spent a couple of hours in his dressing room one night after a long and strenuous session, trying to get a certain blue by putting blue grease paint on an electric bulb until he obtained the shade he was looking for. There were none of the beautiful colored gelatin filters and powerful lighting equipment in use in those days that there are now.

Mr. Hopkins' opinion of John's Hamlet, taken from his book, *Letters to a Lonely Boy*, speaks so eloquently that it would be hard to find a better description of a great actor's methods. "Nothing was a trouble to John. He would go to the wigmaker's, bootmaker's, armor-maker's, forty times, if necessary. He was always the first to know his part, and would rehearse each time as though it were a performance. He was never late, and never made excuses, and would rehearse scenes with actors as long as they wanted; he never grew tired. To him, perfection was the aim, and its attainment could not be too much trouble. He loved creating a

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part, and once the excitement had passed, the part interested him no more. He was not the actor who wanted to recline on a long run. Many unkind things have been said of his desertion of the theater later on; everything, from unreliability to dissipation. None of them were true. He was that rarest of phenomena—the actor who hated to act—loved to create, but who could not bear to look again upon a finished painting. In the hundred and one performances he played many different Hamlets. There were many disagreements as to whether he was good or bad. None could be settled, because the disputants were talking about different performances. I think," continued Mr. Hopkins, "that the very best Hamlet he gave, was one at which Ethel was the only attendant; she sat in the balcony. Here was what she had dreamed of in the boy who in early life had given her a great deal of concern."

The Hopkins production of *Hamlet* opened on November 16, 1922, at the Sam Harris Theatre, New York, with the following cast:

Francisco	.....	John Clark
Bernardo	.....	Lark Taylor
Horatio	.....	Frederick Lewis
Marcellus	.....	E. J. Ballantine
Ghost of Hamlet's Father	.....	Reginald Pole
Hamlet	.....	John Barrymore
Claudius, King of Denmark	.....	Tyrone Power

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Gertrude .....	Blanche Yurka
Polonius .....	John S. O'Brien
Laertes .....	Sidney Mather
Ophelia .....	Rosalind Fuller
Rosencrantz .....	Paul Huber
Guildenstern .....	Lawrence Cecil
First Player .....	Lark Taylor
Player King .....	Burnel Lundee
Second Player .....	Norman Hearn
Player Queen .....	Richard Skinner
Lucianus .....	Vadini Uraneff
A Gentlewoman.....	Stephanie D'Este
King's Messenger .....	Frank Boyd
First Grave Digger .....	Whitford Kane
Second Grave Digger .....	Cecil Clovelly
A Priest .....	Reginald Pole
Osric .....	Edgar Stehli
Fortinbras .....	Lowden Adams

Robert Edmond Jones' settings once again caused a sensation. Their simplicity was their greatness. There was one huge set (someone described it as being as big as Penn Station), with an enormous flight of steps that filled the whole stage. Front drop curtains were designed to give a visual embodiment of the scene's essential idea. It is also interesting to note that only five pieces of property were used in the entire production. Mr. Jones had as his assistant Mrs. Lulu Fralick. She was not only a splendid wardrobe

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mistress, but also one who understood just what the designer wanted. He would say that he desired such and such, giving the fabric, color, and general idea. Within a few hours she would return, with the garment almost finished, and it was invariably just what Mr. Jones wanted. The costumes cost a mere trifle, in comparison with the magnificence of those in *The Jest* or *Richard III*, but John with his graceful figure looked just as expressive and imposing as when he wore the sumptuous trappings of the fifteenth century.

This production under the Hopkins banner at the Sam Harris made dramatic history. Gilbert Gabriel commented upon "the furor it awakened, the auditoriums it filled, the refutation it accomplished against a tradition that classical tragedy stands no chance of popularity in a day which looks on drama as entertainment, and not as edification." Someone who saw the performance said that John gave the age-old speeches the effect of being uttered for the first time. Barrymore himself says that he liked playing *Hamlet* best of all, because he never got tired of it; there was always something new in every performance, always something to be learned from it.

Plans for cleansing the Great White Way of naughty shows were being discussed by the Grand Jury in New York at this time. The deliberation came, after the jury had been charged by Judge Cornelius F. Collins to investigate obscene plays. A complaint was lodged at the office of the License

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Commissioner that *Hamlet* was an obscene play because it dealt with murder—an immoral theme. A minion of the law was sent to see the play. The report came back, "It's O. K. I used to recite it myself, when I was a kid. Wasn't any worse tonight than it was then."

John's incorrigible sense of humor still overcame him. He has always had a fondness for peanuts, and often ate them while he was waiting for his cues in the wings. One night, when the Queen came to the speech, "Sweets to the sweet: farewell!"—which is said while scattering flower petals into Ophelia's grave—instead of petals, he threw in the shells of the peanuts. It reminds one of Otis Skinner's story of the same scene, when the petals which had been scattered were suddenly seen to mount upward, because the grave had been placed over the heating plant of the theater.

One of the first visitors to Barrymore's dressing room was the boy who had played Go-Go in *Peter Ibbetson*, now, of course, grown up. They laughed together over the incident of blackening his hair. John's friend Constantin Stanislavski came to see him after a matinee performance. "Wonderful, wonderful!" he said. "And when are you going to do this again?" Stanislavski could not believe what he heard. "You are going through all that again tonight? In Russia we would only play twice a week."

John beat Edwin Booth's record run, giving a hundred and one performances. Everywhere the company went, the

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story of success was the same. Washington went wild. President and Mrs. Coolidge were present on opening night, and invited Mr. Barrymore and Mr. Hopkins to visit them at the White House. The following is John's description of the auspicious occasion:

"It must be understood that Mr. Hopkins is a man who could keep silent more persistently than any other theatrical man I ever knew. Well, we got to the President's office. Mr. Hopkins didn't say a word. Mr. Coolidge said nothing, and somehow I couldn't think of any remark I might make. The silence grew darker and darker. Finally I spoke up.

" 'Have you seen many Hamlets, Mr. Coolidge?'

"Against his better instincts, the President spoke.

" 'Two,' he replied. 'You and E. H. Sothern.'

" 'And which performance did you like better?'

"Mr. Coolidge thought for a moment, then replied, 'Well, Mr. Sothern's clothes were prettier than yours.'

"And that constituted the conversation, in so far as the theatrical world was concerned."

Harold Sims, secretary to the British embassy, arranged an informal party in honor of Mr. Barrymore. He charmed the ladies of Washington; in fact, mutual admiration was the keynote of the evening.

The same welcome was given *Hamlet* in New Haven. John was guest of honor at the Elizabethan Club at Yale, where he was introduced by Jack R. Crawford, Professor of



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English, and personal friend of Dave Wallace's, Mr. Hopkins' press agent. Here John was in his glory among kindred spirits. In a safe was a priceless collection of Shakespeare, and Barrymore was permitted to delve into its contents.

At the Opera House in Boston, all-time records for a Shakespearean play were broken. Playing at a three-dollar top, the box-office receipts for one night were \$3,848.88. The Saturday matinee broke the world's record for a matinee performance of *Hamlet*—\$5,983.

On the top floor of the Copley-Plaza, where John and his entourage had a suite, John Singer Sargent, the great portrait painter, had his studio. Meeting him is one of John's happiest Boston memories. John posed for him. There was no time for a portrait in oils, so a beautiful charcoal head was done, while the two men discussed art. Although Mr. Sargent was getting enormous prices for his work, he insisted upon making a present of the drawing. Professor Copeland of Harvard, known as "Copey" to his friends, invited Barrymore to his salon, where the writers of the day met. Heywood Broun and John exchanged anecdotes until dawn.

The company reached Philadelphia at the same time that Leopold Stokowski was conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra, and it was Dave Wallace who introduced the idol of

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the theatrical world to the idol of the music world. These two men had much in common, and it was hard to say which of the two received more adulation from the ladies. Here it was, at a matinee performance, that John made a speech which nearly ended all speeches. He stepped before the curtain after the closet scene (of all places!) and told the audience what a pleasure it was to be back in his own town, and to know that the Philadelphians appreciated good music (looking at Stokowski, who was seated in the front row). "Speaking of music," he continued, "we carry four musicians with the company, but we hire two extra ones in each town, to blow the trumpets at the finish. Now, let me tell you a secret. I die at the end of this play. Those extra trumpeters carry my body up the long flight of steps, as the curtain falls. When we were in Hartford, the way those two extra men tooted, I was mighty glad to get off the stage."

The dignified audience was by now convulsed with laughter. There was an extra loud guffaw somewhere up in the balcony. John looked up and said, "How in hell did you get in from Hartford?"

News of this speech reached Mr. Hopkins' ears, and he forbade his star to make any more. However, John was hoping one day to play *Hamlet* in London, where they love curtain speeches, so he continued to make them whenever he could.

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John always had a fear that the cast, including himself, would grow stale, so he saw to it that this possibility was mitigated by getting a new store of clever stories. Between the acts, he would tell negro anecdotes in his inimitable style, and was always thinking up something new in the way of surprises.

One night he played a trick on the whole cast. It was in the graveyard scene. Ophelia's body is brought on, on a bier, attended by nuns in white habits, carrying candles. Before the figure of Ophelia is borne from the bier for burial, the grave digger lifts the pall and holds it up, so that the audience cannot see the body. On this particular night, just as Laertes said, "Lay her i' the earth; and from her fair and unpolluted flesh may violets spring!" the grave digger lifted the pall to find John had painted the cheeks of the model to look like a Ziegfeld Follies girl!

He used to play a game quite often on Whitford Kane. When the grave digger is busy shoveling up the earth and stones, he sings a ditty which begins, "In youth when I did love." The song is only a quatrain, and when it is finished Hamlet enters, and speaks. But, for the sheer joy of teasing, John would stand in the wings, wait until the ditty came to an end, and call out, "Sing it again, Whitford, you ought to be in opera." There was no help for it; he had to repeat the song until Hamlet decided to enter.

But Kane had his own joke one night by placing a large



JOHN BARRYMORE AS HAMLET

PHOTOGRAPH



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black mutton bone in among the property white ones which are found at the bottom of the grave. Such pranks, childish though they may seem, served their purpose in preventing the routine from becoming stale.

Returning to his hotel one night after playing Hamlet at Hartford (John always returned to New York after the show), he gave a party. In the middle of the fun, Paul, John's valet, answered the telephone.

"Who is it?" John called out.

"It's Harry Wills, the colored fighter, sir."

"Tell him I want to speak to him."

Ethel happened to be at the party. She picked up the phone.

"Hello, Harry," said Ethel. "How are you?"

"Oh, I'm all right. Only trouble is, I can't get a fight no more, Miss Ethel."

Ethel turned to John and handed him the receiver.

"See what you can do for him, Jack."

"Hello, Harry, you old so-and-so, what's the trouble?" asked John.

"Can't get a fight no more. I'm just broke."

"Say, Harry, how'd you like to fight Firpo?"

"Why, Mr. Barrymore, that would be impossible. You must be kiddin'. I—I—"

But within two months Harry Wills knocked out Firpo at Boyle's Thirty Acres in Jersey City!

## John Barrymore

The *Hamlet* tour was scheduled to close at Cleveland. Everyone was feeling pretty blue. It had been the happiest engagement the cast had ever had. On the last night, John made an unforgettable speech. There wasn't a dry eye onstage, backstage, or in the front of the house.

John has never been good at attending other people's parties, but no one loves to play host better than he. He would not dream of closing a show without some sort of big celebration. The party was given at the Hollenden Hotel in Cleveland on Friday night (Saturday they closed). No expense was spared. Of course, it lasted well into the following day. Everyone kissed John, and John kissed everyone. There was a matinee the next afternoon. The incredible happened. Barrymore did not turn up until four o'clock, and the audience *waited!* That was real homage. At another party John gave three weeks before, he invited all the girls from George White's *Scandals*, as well as the cast of *Hamlet*, and their friends. The finest jazz band that could be found provided the music for the dancing. Imagine the delight of those girls to find a hundred-dollar bill for each one of them neatly tucked under her plate.

While on the subject of John Barrymore's parties, the story of one which he and Ned Sheldon gave in Santa Barbara, California, should be told.

It was in the summer of 1916. The actor and the playwright had been feted everywhere. People had been gener-

## Hamlet at Home

ous in entertaining them, and they were wondering how they were going to return all this hospitality. John hit upon a plan to do *Pantaloon*, J. M. Barrie's one-act play, and to put it on lavishly. They got to work. In no time, special scenery was being painted, under John's supervision. Ned Sheldon wrote the prologue, which was spoken by James Kirkwood. Adrienne Morrison, mother of the Bennett girls, played Columbine, Richard Bennett played Clown, and John was Harlequin. The finest orchestra was sent for from San Francisco. The party was given at the Monteceto Country Club. Eight little boys in Eton suits acted as ushers, two of them sat on high stools and handed out the programs, which had been printed in Old English style from wood type. This type was specially obtained at great expense through Reggie Fernald, editor of a Santa Barbara newspaper. The sumptuously laden supper table was banked with gardenias, and real nightingales warbled enchantingly. Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree and his daughter Iris were guests of honor. It was their first visit to Hollywood.

Toward daybreak, two of the guests had a quarrel, at the head of the staircase. It wasn't serious, but one of them caught his foot in the stair carpet somehow and fell all the way down, rolling right to the feet of Sir Herbert. However, nothing seemed to surprise the English actor after a few weeks in Hollywood. He just stepped aside, adjusted his monocle, and said, "Remarkable, you Americans."



## John Barrymore

In 1924 John had a picture contract to fulfill for Warner Brothers, to play lead in *Beau Brummel*. Mary Astor played opposite him. It is a pity that sound had not been perfected then, for it was one of the most beautiful portrayals in Barrymore's varied career.

How he worked on that picture, and kept up his study of Hamlet at the same time, in order to keep his memory fresh for his subsequent reopening at New York's Manhattan Opera House, only Paul, his valet, and himself know. What an effective character study he made of Beau Brummel, the son of a pastry cook, who by his conceit and affectation utterly defeated all the snobs of London. The scene, just before Beau dies in a debtor's prison, in which his mind wanders back to the days of his extravagant youth, is poignant in the extreme. He orders his understanding jailer to pour the champagne and serve the guests—all the fruits of a distraught brain—and the pathetic way in which he carries out the pleasantries of a host was surely one of the most beautiful pieces of work John has ever done.

To finish *Beau*, Barrymore worked all day Saturday and Saturday night, sustaining himself solely on coffee, and having an occasional rubdown and massage. All day Sunday and most of Sunday night, into the small hours of Monday, he kept at it. There was a mad dash for the train. He had to be in New York by the following Monday. Once settled down, he sent for two Pullman porters, who knew him of

## Hamlet at Home

old. (There never was a passenger so popular among porters.) The moment the men arrived, he would say, "Now, I am going to give you this book to hold—the book is really the skull of Yorick, and you are the Grave Digger. Now you, over there, are Polonius." That was how he rehearsed, all the way across the continent. He arrived in New York Saturday, rehearsed with the company, who were ready for him, all day Sunday, and reopened *Hamlet* on Monday.

He amused the cast by telling them a story concerning the last night of the filming of *Beau Brummel*. There was a moonlight scene to be shot, showing an old-fashioned four-in-hand coach, laden with passengers, struggling up a hill in the snow. There was no fake about this setting, the snow was genuine; in fact, the atmosphere was so cold that Barrymore was afraid the whole crowd would freeze. So he surreptitiously ordered bottles of brandy to be brought, and everyone working on the scene had a good stiff drink to warm him up—coffee seemed to have lost its enchantment for the moment. There was certainly a greater atmosphere of camaraderie on the set, but he told the *Hamlet* cast he often wondered how the coach ever reached the top of that hill!

## CHAPTER NINE

### *HAMLET ABROAD*

FOLLOWING THE SUCCESS OF "HAMLET" IN THIS COUNTRY, John decided to produce it in London, this time under his own management. Edwin Booth had done it—why not a Barrymore? He had also been invited to come to England by the Shakespeare Memorial Committee. In any case, win or lose, John had made up his mind, and that was enough. He had saved twenty thousand dollars in America, and when he finally opened in London he had a bankroll of three pounds, but there was plenty of high hope in his heart. However, he was to get back not only the money he had invested, but ten thousand dollars more. The money was not everything to him, but the glory of achievement was beyond price. "Wild Jack" had made good, the "Bad Boy of Broadway" had proved himself to be very much in earnest, and the most critical audience of Shakespeare in the world was pleased.

It must not be supposed that all these achievements were

## Hamlet Abroad

easy. It may seem almost incredible, but he had to wait two whole years before he could obtain a theater. Although she had never seen John as Hamlet in New York, Michael had gone ahead of her husband, as a sort of social press agent, for she had many friends in the upper strata, and loved tea parties as much as John loathed them. Among other notable people of the literati, Michael knew George Bernard Shaw. John used to tease her about this, and say, "You can always tell when Mike has been out with Shaw. Her conversation is full of Shavianisms the next day." Nonetheless, she met many London producers and theater owners, and she talked incessantly of her husband's wonderful *Hamlet* to them.

Everyone was charming to John in the English capital, both in the social world and in the theatrical, until he commenced to talk about his forthcoming production, and of leasing a theater for it. Immediately the person to whom he was speaking would freeze up, and John, who had started out that day with the express purpose of talking business, would, in abject fear, turn the conversation to fishing in Alaska or to hunting Kodiak bears. After all, it was only natural that there should be some bridling among the British at the idea of an American coming over to do their much-prized masterpiece.

Eventually, after displaying an almost superhuman patience, and a matchless enthusiasm, he managed to interest Frederick Harrison, lessee of the Theatre Royal, Haymarket,

## John Barrymore

one of the most famous and traditional houses in London, and, incidentally, the theater where Maurice Barrymore had played many times in the past. Mr. Harrison agreed to rent the house to Barrymore for six weeks. John put up half the money for the production and raised the other half among his friends. Mr. Hopkins had never had any faith in the idea of a London venture, but he generously lent his head carpenter, his head electrician, George Schaff, and his stage manager, William Adams, from his American production, although Mr. Hopkins' name never appeared on the program. These splendid men relieved John of many responsibilities.

A little story, showing one of Barrymore's *beaux-gestes*, must not be omitted, for too little is known of his thousand kindnesses and unheralded generosity. Let him shock the conventionalists, and the headlines of the newspapers call him "America's Number One Cut-up" or "Hollywood's Bad Boy" or any name that will catch the public eye. But how many hear of his bounteous gifts to impecunious actors, to script girls down on their luck, of his contributions to homes for crippled children, of the sympathy and the gifts of money bestowed by him at the sight of anyone suffering? The only publicity ever given to a Barrymore's charity was when the family combined to donate fifty thousand dollars to endow a room for stagefolk, in the new structure of the Fifth Avenue Hospital.

## Hamlet Abroad

But to return to the story of *Hamlet* in London. One day, when the extra ladies were trying on shoes at a rehearsal, John noticed one young girl who became painfully embarrassed as the shoemaker approached her; in fact, she was on the verge of tears. Calling her aside, Barrymore asked her to come to his dressing room for a moment. Timidly she did as she was told. "You are not the only person, my dear," he said kindly, "who has had holes in her stockings. Many a time I have had all my toes out at once." The shy young girl was immediately at her ease, the shoemaker was summoned, and she was fitted in the dressing room, without further distress. Many envious glances were cast at the extra, as Barrymore took her to dinner, and one may imagine not a little malice on the part of a titled lady with whom John had refused to dine, and who happened also to be one of his "extra ladies."

Of course, being wine and dined by people who are complete strangers, and having to be affable and charming, is one of the many obligations of the successful actor. But nothing infuriates John more than people who ask questions merely for the sake of saying something. He has often made himself thoroughly disliked for the sole purpose of keeping tiresome people away from him. On one occasion, at a party, a woman who had been pestering him with a barrage of questions asked him if he would ever think of playing Hamlet in modern clothes. "No!" he shouted back at her,

## John Barrymore

for his patience was at breaking point, "but I would be quite willing to play King Lear in the nude."

During rehearsals one day John had made an engagement to meet a friend at the Green Room Club, in London, and while waiting, happened to pick up a book which he began to read. It was an old English history. He opened a page at random, and the following line caught his eye: "The Prince Regent went from bad to worse, until finally he was associating with the Barrymores." No one would appreciate that story better than John himself.

At last all was ready, and the great night had arrived. *Hamlet* was produced in February 1925 with the following cast at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket:

Claudius, King of Denmark . . . . .	Malcolm Keen
Hamlet . . . . .	John Barrymore
Polonius, Lord Chamberlain . . . . .	Herbert Waring
Horatio, Friend to Hamlet . . . . .	George Relph
Laertes, Son to Polonius . . . . .	Ian Fleming
Rosencrantz {	courtiers } Jevan Brandon-Thomas
Guildenstern {	
Osrice . . . . .	Michael Hogan
A Priest . . . . .	Frederick Cooper
A Messenger . . . . .	Harding Steerman
A Gentleman . . . . .	Stanley Roberts
Bernardo . . . . .	Edmund Gordon
Marcellus . . . . .	Roy Travers
Francisco . . . . .	John Michael
	A. G. Poulton

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Player King .....	E. Harcourt Williams
Player Queen .....	Arnold Bowen
Player King .....	Burnel Lundbec
Player Queen ....	Byam Shaw
The Poisoner .....	Vadim Uraneff
First Grave Digger .....	Ben Field
Second Grave Digger ....	Michael Martin-Harvey
Fortinbras, Prince of Norway.....	Shayle Gardner
Ghost of Hamlet's Father....	Courtenay Thorpe
Gertrude, Queen of Denmark....	Constance Collier
Ophelia .....	Fay Compton
Gentlewoman .....	Peggy Webster
<hr/>	
Stage Director .....	William Adams
Business Manager .....	Bernard Elliott

The house was packed to suffocation, all theatrical London was agog, and Barrymore himself almost melted with nervousness. That interminable moment when the house lights go down, and out of the silence a quivering voice whispers, "Now there is no escape"—that minute in which an actor goes through a hundred years of agony was here. Out front was an expectant, excited, and critical audience. In the stalls were George Bernard Shaw, John Masefield, Lord Dunsany, Somerset Maugham, Mary Anderson, Lord and Lady Asquith, Sir Anthony Hope Hawkins, Henry Arthur Jones, Mr. and Mrs. Ben Webster, Mr. and Mrs. Kendall, and many other luminaries. Madame Melba sent a



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laurel wreath, and telegrams and messages had been arriving all day.

The result is theatrical history. Michael Strange must have rejoiced at the acclamation her husband received during the nine weeks of his London season. She sat with Shaw in the stalls on the opening night.

America had shown her capability of producing a *Hamlet* as important as any of the traditional portrayals of the mother country. Barrymore scored a success as triumphant as could have been desired by his most enthusiastic admirers on the other side of the Atlantic, and, what is more, his triumph was far greater than that of Edwin Booth, for the latter brought his Prince to London after he had been perfecting the part for over twenty years, while John had only two seasons in which to ripen his portrayal. The following is an extract from Ivor Brown's criticism in *The Saturday Review*, which is representative of the way in which John's acting was received: "Mr. Barrymore believes, more than any actor I have seen, in the power of the pause. His slow approach to the text is reverential; whatever you may miss in this 'Hamlet,' you will not miss the argument. What one sees and hears is a player of high executive talent, addressing himself to a philosophy that is not to be ranted for tempestuous dramatic effects, but hammered out lovingly with the craftsmanship of the contemplative mind. He doesn't allow the rich and sensuous imagery of Hamlet's

## Hamlet Abroad

speech to act as tinder for an emotional bonfire; his mind does not leap from peak to peak of thought, instead he moves from point to point to his conclusions, with the honest gravity of a relentless thinker. All through the play runs this spruce Hamlet, gentle and valiant, 'the glass of fashion and the mould of form,' and this figure Mr. Barrymore can very handsomely present. Mr. Thorpe (the ghost) made the night as hideous as Mr. Barrymore made it beautiful."

The thing that seemed to intrigue the English audiences most was the entirely new idea of the ghost of Hamlet's father being heard but not seen. It was represented by a sort of will-o'-the-wisp quivering on the backdrop.

When the performance was over, instead of accepting any one of the many invitations to supper that were extended to him, John returned to Cheyne Walk, where he lived in Whistler's house, bringing with him William Adams and George Schaff. John has always had a flair for cooking, and after a strenuous night he set about making goulash of ingredients gathered from four refrigerators. Mr. Adams says it was one of the finest suppers he ever had.

The theater cat had had a habit of crossing the stage and looking at John just as he came to his soliloquy. This was during rehearsals. But, lo and behold, one night John saw the cat beginning her trek past the footlights. He casually commenced his speech, crossed the stage, picked up the cat

## John Barrymore

and continued the soliloquy with the animal in his arms.

None but a Barrymore would think of that.

No London experience is complete without its fog. In the closet scene there were only three lights used at any time. But the fog was so thick that it had penetrated the theater, and the three lights were scarcely visible. When Hamlet says to the Queen, "What is the matter, Mother?" John looked up, and realizing that they were playing the scene in virtual darkness, he complained loudly to George Schaff (the master electrician), strode off the stage, and attacked the dimmer board—pulling the lights up and down. Schaff was furious, and told him to go back onstage. This astonished John so much that he promptly obeyed, and went on with the scene, as if nothing unusual had happened.

Jack Barrymore met so many interesting people during his stay in London that it is hard to remember all the stories connected with them. Here is one about Hilaire Belloc, who was his host at a dinner in a Regent Street restaurant, famous for its whitebait. Mr. Belloc insisted that his guest must taste this speciality; he simply refused to take no for an answer. John says, "I love whale steak, or shark's fin, but whitebait eludes me. It was all right for him, he did not have to play Hamlet." He was in the middle of his soliloquy when he suddenly became a little wild-eyed; rising, he strode desperately off the stage, returning a moment later to resume. The next day a critic who had watched this per-

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formance wrote that Barrymore had exhibited something new in stage tradition, and it required thought. "He did not know," added John, "that it really required speed."

He was, at this time, a great favorite with the Prince of Wales, afterward Edward VIII, and many a night they spent together at clubs and parties. It was always a puzzle to His Royal Highness how Barrymore could get through such a strenuous part every night and yet always to be ready for any amusement the Prince might suggest. John's answer to this was, "My simple recipe is fervor and champagne. But I can assure you, Sir, that the lunches and dinners that I have to attend are much more tiring."

Once Barrymore and Chaliapin tried to drink each other under the table. This, by the way, was not during the run of *Hamlet*, but afterward, when John was enjoying a much-needed vacation. Chaliapin threatened to make John take his place in the opera that night should he become too mellow, but, in spite of hours of intensive drinking of vodka and other liquors, Chaliapin sang the best role of his career, according to the critics.

Much of Barrymore's time was spent in looking up his old friends, whom he had not seen in some years. Mr. and Mrs. Ben Webster were particularly happy to see the boy who had spent many a happy week end with them during his Wimbledon schooldays. He also renewed his friendship with Gerald du Maurier, whom he had first met sometime

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about 1897, when Ethel was almost nineteen and had that glorious daffodil-colored hair and proud demeanor that Gerald had found so fascinating. He had, in fact, fallen violently in love with her, but somehow they found they were not suited to each other, and the engagement was broken off. Perhaps it was on account of the temperamental changeability of the family. It is almost impossible to point to any particular portrait of the Barrymores and say, now that is the real Lionel, or Ethel, and more especially is this true of John. He is a curious composite of saint and sinner. One day you will love him for his charm, his wit, his appreciation of the smallest kindness; there is no getting him out of your mind, once you have spent a couple of hours with him, for his conversation sparkles with Rabelaisian humor. Another day, you will run away from him because he has chosen to be distasteful. He has that extraordinary chameleonlike proclivity of being able to look half his age one day and twice his age the next, but, as Daniel Frohman says, "While temperament and art are a good team, certainly the former is the more indispensable."

At one performance of *Hamlet*, Ellen Terry sat in the front seat of the stage box at the Haymarket. She was by now very old and had gone stone deaf, but, in spite of these handicaps, she could remember every line of the play, and her recollection of all of Shakespeare's works was remarkable. John, of course, felt honored by her presence, but in

## Hamlet Abroad

her enthusiasm she kept repeating the speeches so loudly, and invariably fifteen lines ahead, that it nearly drove him crazy. Any sarcasm, such as he might normally have hurled at anyone else, would here have fallen on deaf ears anyway; he was helpless, and completely lost his temper, throwing rapiers all over the stage. When someone chided him for this outburst, he replied, "All the Barrymores have tempers. What do you think we are, book ends?"

His few weeks' run at the Haymarket (nine in all, on account of other commitments already signed by several of the cast) was one of the happiest engagements of his life. The public loved him, his cast admired him, and the staff, both backstage and in the front of the house, down to the last charwoman who cleaned the theater, adored him. He was at the height of his greatness, and the world of the theater was at his feet. In view of the fact that John, since his days as a tyro, had received so few adverse criticisms of his work, it may come as a surprise to read a disparaging comment by one so great as George Bernard Shaw. Before closing the chapter of the Haymarket production, this valuable document should be given in full, it being one of John's most prized possessions:

Dear Mr. Barrymore,

I have to thank you for inviting me—and in such kind terms too—to your first performance of *Hamlet*

## John Barrymore

in London, and I am glad you had no reason to complain of your reception—or on the whole of your press. Everyone felt that the occasion was one of extraordinary interest; so far as your personality was concerned, they were not disappointed.

I doubt, however, whether you have been able to follow the course of Shakespeare's production in England during the last fifteen years or so, enough to realize the audacity of your handling of the play. When I last saw it performed at Stratford-on-Avon, practically the entire play was given in three hours and three-quarters, with one interval of ten minutes, and it made the time pass without the least tedium, though the cast was not in any way remarkable. On Thursday last, you played five minutes longer, with the play cut to ribbons, even to the breath-heaving extremity of cutting out the recorders, which is rather like playing King John without little Arthur.

You saved, say an hour and a half on Shakespeare by the cutting, and filled it up with an interpolated drama of your own dumb show. This was a pretty daring thing to do. In modern shop plays, without characters or anything but the commonest dialogue, the actor has to supply everything but the mere story, getting in the psychology between the lines, and presenting in his own person the fascinating hero whom the author has been unable to create. He is not substituting something of his own for something of the author's; he is filling up a void, and doing the author's work for him. And the author ought to be extremely obliged to him.

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But to try this method on Shakespeare is to take on an appalling responsibility, and put up a staggering pretension. Shakespeare with all his shortcomings was a very great playwright, and the actor who undertakes to improve his plays undertakes thereby to excel to an extraordinary degree in two professions, in both of which the highest success is rare. Shakespeare, himself, though by no means a modest man, did not pretend to be able to play as well as write it; he was content to do a recitation in the dark as the Ghost. But you have ventured not only to act Hamlet, but to discard about a third of Shakespeare's script and substitute stuff of your own, and that too, without the help of dialogue. Instead of giving what is called a reading of *Hamlet*, you say, in effect, "I am not going to read Hamlet at all: I am going to leave it out. But, see what I give you in exchange?"

Such an enterprise must justify itself by its effect on the public. You discard the recorders as hackneyed back chat, and the scene with the King after the death of Polonius, with such speeches as "How all occasions do inform against me" as obsolete junk, and offer instead a demonstration of that very modern discovery called the Oedipus complex, thereby adding a really incestuous motive on Hamlet's part to the merely conventional incest of a marriage (now legal in England) with a deceased husband's brother. You change Hamlet and Ophelia into Romeo and Juliet. As producer, you allow Laertes and Ophelia to hug each other as lovers



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instead of lecturing and squabbling like hectoring big brother and little sister: another complex.

Now, your success in this must depend upon whether the play invented by Barrymore on the Shakespeare foundation is as gripping as the Shakespeare play, and whether your dumb show can hold an audience as a straightforward reading of Shakespearean rhetoric can. I await the decision with interest.

My own opinion is, of course, that of an author. I write plays that play for three hours and a half, even with instantaneous changes and only one short interval. There is no time for silences or pauses: the actor must play on the line and not between the lines, and must do nine-tenths of his acting with his voice. *Hamlet*—Shakespeare's *Hamlet* can be done from end to end in four hours in that way; and it never flags nor bores. Done in any other way Shakespeare is the worst of bores, because he has to be chopped into a mere cold stew. I prefer my way. I wish you would try it, and concentrate on acting rather than authorship, at which, believe me, Shakespeare can ride your head off. But that may be vicarious professional jealousy on my part.

I did not dare to say all this to Mrs. Barrymore on the night. It was chilly enough for her without a coat in the stalls without any cold water from

Your perhaps too candidly,

G. BERNARD SHAW.

## CHAPTER TEN

### HOLLYWOOD

IT HAD BEEN SAID BY SEVERAL PEOPLE THAT IT WAS SHAW'S adverse criticism of John's *Hamlet* that sent him to Hollywood. That such a rumor could possibly have been spread is incredible, and must be put down to jealousy. He tells in a few words his reasons for leaving the stage and settling down in the movie colony.

"On the stage, I had to work for a fairly small salary, but in Hollywood I can loaf and yet earn ten times as much money. Anyway, almost everything is up to the director, and you don't have to make curtain speeches! But, seriously, the most important thing that the screen offers, as against the stage, is that lack of repetition—the continual playing of a part, which is so ruinous to an actor, is entirely eliminated."

Before leaving for the United States, Barrymore felt that he needed a long rest, a change of occupation, complete relaxation. But where to go was the question. The answer

## John Barrymore

to this query was planned by the strategy of Paul, who knew every mood and fancy of the man he had served for so many years. He opened the box which contained one of the finest sets of fishing tackle that eyes could see, and managed to be very preoccupied in the art of casting, just as the hero of many a tuna and tarpon party walked in.

"Oh, I was just shining and oiling them up, sir," said Paul as nonchalantly as possible. A few minutes later, conversations were flashing back and forth over the phone. Reservations were being made, and within twenty-four hours, John and twelve pieces of luggage, with Paul in attendance, were on their way to a peaceful vacation, "among the deep mountain pools, made mysterious by the brimming clouds." Once arrived at a quaint little place, just one mile from the Welsh border, called Bycross-on-the-Wye, John took up his abode in a lovely old rambling cottage set back in acres of woodlands. It had not been rented for many a long day, for around the district had been circulated a story of ghosts which haunted the bedrooms. This, of course, Barrymore loved—the more ghosts the better.

For three whole days not a bite, then suddenly so much salmon that he lived on it for a whole week; salmon and baked potatoes; then another week on the same fare, until John swore he could never look another salmon in the face. He sent Paul over to their nearest neighbor with enough fish to supply her whole family for three or four days, and

## Hollywood

received in return a lovely steak and kidney pudding which arrived in time for supper, and made as only the English can make it.

About a month later John decided it might be well to have a shave and a haircut; his beard had grown so long he looked like John the Baptist. Paul accompanied him to the little county town of Hereford, inhabited mostly by wealthy sheep farmers, where everybody knows everybody, and where the appearance of strangers among them is something rather unusual. Imagine the entrance of John into that quiet town, with his beard and long hair, and garbed in a fur coat—a garment never seen in England at any time, at least not with a man inside it. The fact that no colored man had ever put his foot on Herefordshire soil within the passing of a couple of centuries, plus the additional phenomenon that Paul was wearing a fur hat, an old woolen sweater, and puttees, further astounded the natives, and soon the news spread that Robinson Crusoe and his man Friday had come back to life and were walking the streets of Hereford.

John's fearlessness has often been the cause of anxiety on the part of those who feel themselves responsible for his welfare. On one occasion, when he was out in a rowboat on the Wye, he suddenly dived off into the falls without a word of warning. His alarmed manservant hastily rowed to a tree growing out of a rock, tied a rope around it, and threw the line to John, who pulled himself up, in spite of jutting

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crag, with the dexterity of a schoolboy. Before leaving that sleepy bit of England's beauty in Hereford, the ghosts that haunted the cottage had been laid. They proved to be bats—of eighteen and twenty inches' wingspread—which occasionally flapped about in the old chimney near the bedrooms.

Within a few months after his salmon fishing near Wales, Barrymore was catching swordfish in the waters off Catalina Island in California. He had just gotten up in the middle of the night in London and had boarded a ship bound for home.

Barrymore's arrival in the film stars' Mecca was marked by great expectancy on the part of neighbors, directors, fellow artists, and tradesmen. The fame of his eccentricities had penetrated so far that the magnates of the film industry were a bit surprised to find their favorite bad boy did not put the entire movie colony on its ear. The fact was that "Wild Jack" was not in the least as he had been painted, and was soon discovered to be the friendliest of people. He was usually to be found in the center of a circle of laughing doormen and extras. His jokes, his ready wit, and his marvelous stories made him the most sought-after man on the lot.

John had a pet monkey named Clementina, given him by Georges Carpentier, the French pugilist. This intelligent little animal was devoted to Barrymore, and went everywhere with him, perched on his shoulder. All the time she

## Hollywood

kept up a chatter, and at night she used to perch herself on the headboard of John's bed. The bungalow in which they were living was made up of twenty-four rooms, which could be rented either as twelve upstairs and twelve downstairs, or could be divided into four apartments of six rooms each.

At this time John was living in an upper suite, and one of the Warner brothers was living below. The apartment opposite to John's was occupied by Carmel Myers and was divided off from his by means of heavy velvet drapes. A few days after his arrival in Hollywood, a rumor was spread around that he had a woman in his apartment and that he was heard to threaten he would lock her in the bathroom if she did not do what he wanted.

When he was confronted with this canard, he was absolutely stupefied. "Who spread this damn story?" he fumed.

"Miss Carmel Myers," came the answer.

John was silent for a while, deep in thought. Suddenly he burst into gales of laughter. "Carmel must have heard me through those velvet drapes talking baby talk to Clementina. When she refuses to respond to my terms of endearment, I always threaten to lock her in the bathroom. This time Carmel has added two and two together, and made five."

Sometime later, when John owned a yacht, he used to drive from Hollywood to San Pedro harbor, where the boat was moored, to spend the week end. Charlie Chaplin was

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often a guest, and the two men would lie on the deck all night and talk about people, much about the Du Mauriers, a favorite topic of John's. Clementina was always taken along. She loved to investigate everything. She was tied up by means of a long rope, and she would climb up on the rigging and jump about, as happy as a grasshopper, chattering merrily away to herself.

The big movie news of 1925 was that John Barrymore had become a Warner star and was going to play Captain Ahab in *The Sea Beast*, a story of the whaling ships of New England in 1840, taken from Melville's classic, *Moby Dick*. Warners had wanted him originally for *Don Juan*, the great lover, Lord Byron's story of passionate romance. The love scenes in *Brummel* had been so frequent that John felt he couldn't stand another. So at first he absolutely refused to play in *Don Juan*, and suggested *Moby Dick*. Everyone thought he was crazy, and told him that as Captain Ahab he would have a whale as romantic lead. That did not disturb John in the least; he even suggested with a grin that they could star the whale if they wished. When a Barrymore has made up his mind, it is usually *made up*. So Warners compromised, and it was decided that if their star would make *Don Juan*, they would let him play *Moby Dick*.

His own description of acting Don Juan is a gem. "Some of my love scenes were so hot," he says, "that I saved the company money by making it unnecessary to heat the stages.

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I dashed around on a white horse and made love all over the lot, to girls, old women, flowers, horses, and buggies, and the moon, and I looked like lilacs smell, but everybody seemed to be happy."

Alan Crosland directed, and in the prologue to the film, John played Don Jose, the father of Don Juan, a very interesting contrast in make-up. The picture was too saturated with sweetness and sob stuff for the public's digestion. While this story was being made, the scenario writers were injecting love scenes into *Moby Dick* and rechristening it *The Sea Beast*.

Barrymore was never so eager to get busy on a story as he was when this saga of the sea was ready for shooting. He was almost like a child with a new toy. After all, what were the movies but a Pandora's box? Wasn't there always something being invented? For instance, the synchronization of music with acting. *Don Juan* was the first picture to have this sound, which was really the first step toward the talkies. Better plots were being woven, more intelligent stories were being written, there were better actors and directors. They were entering the supercolossal stage; these were the boom days when millions were being made by the actors, the producers, the distributors, and the exhibitors.

Just as the studio was all set for the shooting of *The Sea Beast*, another love story walked in. It was Dolores Costello. She and her sister Helene had been to see the casting direc-



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tor that day, and were on their way out when John spied them. Always on the alert for beauty, he made inquiries, and found they were the two daughters of Maurice Costello, who in his younger days had been the first screen idol.

Barrymore sent for Dolores, who charmed him. The moment he started to talk with her, he decided she must be his leading woman. Within twenty-four hours Warner Brothers were made defendants in a large damage suit, brought by Priscilla Bonner, who had been signed to play lead opposite John in this movie. John was adamant. He had decided that no one but Dolores would do for his "love interest." This was, of course, a wonderful break for the blonde-haired beauty, who had played child parts with her parents when she was small. Dolores had only reached the chorus of George White's *Scandals* when she and her sister with their mother had set out for Hollywood, where Dolores had played a small part in one movie for Warners.

She was born in Pittsburgh on September 17, 1906. When very young, she modeled for James Montgomery Flagg, who many years later painted an excellent portrait of John as Hamlet. Warner Brothers saw her in Chicago and sent her to Hollywood. Her fragile sweetness and natural charm made a great appeal, but it was not until this chance came that she deservedly reaped acting honors.

John used to find inspiration in the flowerlike loveliness of Dolores. He said to her one day, "You always look as if

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you are thinking of something holy and beautiful. Tell me, what are your thoughts at this moment?"

"If you really want to know, I was thinking about hamburgers," was her laughing reply.

The picture took eight months to complete, from May to January. Speaking of this, John said one day to his friend Prescott, "My mother died in Santa Barbara, Uncle John Drew died in San Francisco, and I die in Hollywood if this picture isn't a success."

Barrymore enjoyed this rough-and-tumble, adventurous part, and worked at it from morning till night, and—greatest joy for all—he had to wear rags. For three nights in succession, defiant of the terrific storm that swept across the sloping deck of the whaler, regardless of the gigantic waves, he played his scenes, again and again, untiring, good tempered, and still able to crack jokes. Apropos of the ducking he received, Lionel remarked, "Well, he's got a bath at last!"

He had, as we know, grown tired of being the great lover and had made several vehement statements about cutting out love scenes entirely, and merely suggesting them. After a great deal of talk on the matter, motion-picture audiences saw the first supercolossal love scene. It was at the end of the picture, and somehow the director could not be pleased. The scene with Dolores was shot five times, and when it reached the screen, instead of having picked out the best of

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the five scenes, he had put them end to end, making the longest love angle in motion-picture history.

A great deal of time and money had been spent on the preparing of a property whale, but all efforts were to no purpose. So finally the whale scenes were done in miniature. It was becoming the fashion to highspot a picture with a color sequence, and there was one in this. Once when John was posing for the early Technicolor, he stayed still so long under a too-green light that he fell asleep, causing the whole company huge concern. They thought he was dead!

John had enjoyed doing the sea scenes so much in this picture that the inborn instinct of the sea rover overcame him (this, Ethel says, derives from an ancestor, Sir Philip Blythe, a sixteenth-century pirate) and he could not rest until he owned a sailing vessel. It was now that he purchased the *Mariner*, a boat which had twice won the trans-Pacific race, from California to Honolulu. John was proud of his Currier and Ives engravings which decorated the cabin. He had framed them all in gold frames, and many a musty old picture was purchased from a second-hand store merely to get the inner gold-leaf mounts.

*The Sea Beast* was released on April 13, 1925, and was a great hit. After all, when a make-believe love story turns out to be a real one, there must be just that "something more," that little inherent ecstasy that resolves itself into a

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radiance, which the audience must feel and carry away as unforgettable.

When the picture was completed, John took a special trip back to New York to see Michael, who was then living in Beekman Place. He was nervous about his welcome, and was very glad to see Katie, the Irish maid, as she opened the door. A broad smile was on her face.

The moment Michael saw him, she exclaimed, "My God, you have gone gray."

John protested loudly, "It's the crazy lights you've got. You always did have funny ideas about lamps." So they went on, he with his stubbornness and she with her vehemence, until he took his leave and returned to Hollywood.

The courtship of Dolores lasted a year and a half, before Barrymore was able to marry again. She played opposite him again in *When a Man Loves*, and was starred in *The Third Degree* before she became queen of the Royal Family. There were many difficulties to overcome with Dolores' father, who objected to the idea of his daughter becoming the third Mrs. Barrymore.

The Costello family, at one time, lived on a beautiful estate in Bayside, Long Island. The house which one entered through huge wrought-iron gates had a long approach to it, and overlooked the Sound, at Fort Totten. This was in the days when Costello was Barrymore's precursor as the screen's

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handsomest man, the darling of the ladies of the Nineteen Hundreds, when Vitagraph Studio in Brooklyn was making two-reelers.

Money was a-plenty and life looked rosy then for the family. The two girls, Helene and Dolores, used to attend Flushing High School on Long Island, and even then the instinct for making a "star entrance" was inherent, for one or the other of them was always late for class or would keep the entire gym assembly waiting, because she could not find her shoes. One day, says Dolores, she really arrived in good time for the first class, and the teacher was so amazed that she called out, "Will the class stand? We have Miss Costello with us this morning."

Maurice kept guard over his estate as if he were his own game warden, threatening to horsewhip anyone who dared walk on his grounds. Knowing this, one can easily believe that he shot at John one day when the latter called at the Costello ménage in Hollywood to see Dolores. Mrs. May Costello, Dolores' mother, a trouser of the vaudeville stage, was very happy about this love match. Her chief thought in life was the happiness of her children. First, she liked John for himself, and, second, she foresaw possible stardom for her daughter. Also, financial cares were weighing her down; her husband's glamor had long ceased to be of any commercial value, and it was extremely hard to get work. For some unaccountable reason, Maurice took a violent dislike



*Highlights of a Screen Career*









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to John; so extreme was this that they could not meet without having words.

John at this time was working strenuously, getting up at 6 A.M. and going to bed at 10 P.M. He would not allow Paul to shave him, preferring to do it himself. The people in the room next his at the Beverly Hills Hotel always knew when he was up; invariably strains of "I know you belong to somebody else so why don't you leave me alone?" would come floating in on the early-morning breeze. Sandwiches for the day were prepared by Paul, along with green figs, pomegranates, and grapes, and off he would go to the studio, just as most of his pals on Broadway would be tumbling into bed.

But at week ends he made up for this strict routine. He always chartered a boat from Captain Archibald Wheeler (this was before John bought the *Mariner*) and would sail off to Catalina Island to fish. One time he caught four tunas weighing from twenty to fifty-two pounds each. He had one of these mounted and shipped to New York. On his way back, he invariably stopped at Booze Brothers and ordered sand dabs, quite a rarity. Often he would return on Harold Lloyd's yacht, as far as San Pedro harbor, where the car would be waiting to take him back to Hollywood.

Another of his delights was to drive around East Lake Park, Los Angeles, at night and watch for the lovers. The unsuspecting young things would park their cars and walk

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to the edge of the lake. There they would sit and hold hands beneath the moon. Barrymore carried with him a pair of spectacles with false eyes attached to them, and an upper and lower set of hideous artificial teeth, which, when placed in his mouth, stuck out like the fangs of an animal. These were relics of the *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* movie. He would don these atrocities, creep up behind the lovers, and scare them half to death.

For United Artists John did *The Beloved Rogue*, a story woven around the colorful life of François Villon. Marceline Day played opposite him. It proved to be another picture as bad as *Don Juan* and equally as saturated with sob stuff; but his friend, Robert E. Sherwood, did not speak of his acting in this movie as he had of *Don Juan*. John's acting in that, he said, was the worst performance in the history of the world!

The famous profile was at its best in this new picture. John once said, "If you see the right side of my face in a movie, you may be perfectly sure that there are stout steel wires attached to my protesting body and that a sixty horsepower donkey is being used to pull me into focus." He loathes *The Beloved Rogue* so much that no one dares mention it in his presence. He happened to be in San Francisco when it was first shown. Purchasing a seat somewhere up in the "gods," he entered the theater. Of course no one recognized him. He sat halfway through it in silence, but

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there came a time when the strain was more than he could bear. He roused the house by shouting, "Call yourself an actor? My God, what a ham!"

It was in this city that John was in a certain night club with Prescott. Going into the men's washroom, they beheld a picture of Maurice, nailed up crudely on the wall. John, in a blind fury, tore it down. His face was livid. He kissed the picture in a torrent of filial affection, ran upstairs, and demanded satisfaction of the scared proprietor, for the insult to his father and the Barrymore name.

No one welcomed the advent of the talkies more than Jack Barrymore. The introduction of sound had made superior stories necessary, and had changed the personnel completely. Realism came in both stories and acting, and here the background of the Royal Family came into its own. One had to be able to act now; there would be no more captions to the pictures, no more, "I love you, I love you, God! how I love you!" This admirable sentiment would have to be expressed with a glance, a smile. Flesh-and-blood heroes were wanted; they could even be middle-aged. They no longer had to be dreamy-eyed and topped with golden curls. The public became educated to the finesse of acting, critical of mistakes. Many an actor and actress who had become idols in the days of silent pictures found themselves now out in the cold. Their voices did not fit in with the pattern which the public had woven around them. That dis-

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illusionment was their death knell, as it was the beginning of the great popularity of such artists as Marie Dressler, Will Rogers, Wallace Beery, Edward G. Robinson, and a host of others who had theatrical background and years of training. Dolores was in the first all-talking picture, *The Lights of New York*.

*General Crack* was the name of John's first talkie, a mammoth production, but of little aesthetic value. It gave the publicity men plenty to write about: how many people took part, how many yards of material were used in the making of the costumes, and so forth. It was a great spectacle, and that is all that can be said of it.

One story must not be left out, *en passant*. It concerns Lowell Sherman, a rival matinee idol, and suitor for Helene Costello. John had known him for a long time, but they were not friendly now; in fact, they scarcely deigned to speak to each other. Sherman and Barrymore were cast together in *General Crack*. John resented the airs his future brother-in-law now put on, such as refusing to come on the set until John did, et cetera. But when Sherman heard that all costumes had to be approved by Mr. Barrymore, the fat was in the fire. A rule is a rule, however, and Lowell Sherman had to abide by it. One day he sent his dresser in with a crown he was to wear, for John's inspection. Barrymore looked at it disapprovingly, and said, "Tell my future brother-in-law that I think his crown looks like a paper

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basket in a third-rate rooming house, but I O. K. it, for nothing could be more appropriate than for him to stick his head into it."

The Helene Costello-Lowell Sherman marriage was a failure, and they were divorced in 1932. The difficulties were caused partly by the feud between Barrymore and Sherman. Lowell had forbidden Helene to visit her sister, nor was she to put her foot upon the Barrymore threshold.

Maybe the whole affair had been started when, long before Dolores had wed John, or Sherman had wed Helene, John was giving a party in Hollywood. During the late afternoon Barrymore had fulfilled a promise to give a reading from *Hamlet* at a charity affair. He returned home to find that quite a number of his guests had already arrived. John was still in costume, and Sherman happened to be there. John said something that seemed to upset him, and Lowell twitted him about being in costume. Finally things got so hot between them that Sherman shouted, "To hell with Hamlet!" and made a dash for the garden, John at his heels.

Sherman could run faster than Barrymore, and every time he leaped over a hedge he would turn round and shout again, "To hell with Hamlet!" making his pursuer more angry by the minute. On and on they went, until both were exhausted, and John never did catch up with him. Nor did they ever become friends up to the day of Sherman's death

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And yet, when asked his real opinion of Sherman, John said, "He was born a hundred years after his time; his manners and his wit were in a class by themselves. We were the best of friends, until he became an in-law, and then something happened. God knows what."

*THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT—THIRD MARRIAGE*

WHEN JOHN ANNOUNCED HIS INTENDED MARRIAGE TO Dolores, people deluged the marriage-license bureau with mail, protesting that papers could not be issued because he was not divorced from Michael Strange. Mrs. Oelrichs, Michael's mother, did not even know that her daughter had been divorced, and joined her voice to the protest. Meanwhile John and Michael Strange went on with their separate businesses, completely unconcerned. Half the women in the United States were upset over this affair, if one can judge by the thousands and thousands of letters received. Both principals knew that the divorce was in perfect legal order and were congratulating themselves on having kept the news from the public. The reason for this was that the divorce papers were obtained in Albany in the name of Blythe and not Barrymore.

Michael Strange was now living quietly in Château Gourdon at Dar-sur-Loup, and her first intimation of the Dolores



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match was when the Associated Press called her up and asked her what she had to say about it. She wished them happiness very charmingly.

On November 25, 1928, the wedding took place between John Barrymore Blythe and Dolores Costello. Once again Lionel was best man and Helene was maid of honor. The ceremony, which was marked by simplicity, was performed by the Rev. Theodore Curtis Abel of the Unitarian Society of Hollywood, and was held at the home of the bride's parents in Beverly Hills. The living room was transformed into a bower of roses, and Dolores made a lovely bride in her simple lace dress. Her only ornament was a shower of lilies of the valley, held in place by a diamond pin. Ethel sent congratulations from the East, and expressed her opinion that Dolores was a darling.

It was not until a week later that the newlyweds started on their honeymoon, for the bride had more work to do on a picture she was making. But there was no question of setting up a home, for after only two years in Hollywood John had bought King Vidor's home at Beverly Hills and had made it into a beautiful estate. The house that Jack built at Tower Road was really made of seven houses, and was built on the crest of a spur of one of the Hollywood mountains, overlooking the Pacific. It is a Mexican hacienda, built U-shaped, with a square patio. The roof is of red handmade tiles. Each house has its windows protected by

### The House That Jack Built—Third Marriage

iron grilles. Winding steps lead upward to a new garden, and another house, reminding one of a Jack and the Beanstalk story. The paths around the upper level are made of sunken tree trunks, and the gardens are a profusion of flowers and shrubs. There is one tree, in particular, which cost eighteen hundred dollars. It is called *Phuya obtusa*, and is four hundred and fifty years old. John sent Nishi, his Japanese butler, to San Francisco to buy the tree from the Fair. It was originally bought from a nursery man in Osaka for a Japanese princess. The approaching roads were so winding and steep that John had a road map especially made for friends whom he wished to visit him.

There is a kidney-shaped swimming pool, and more steps lead to a terrace, where brightly covered poles (such as one sees sticking out of the water in Venice) support a silken canopy, and still more steps lead to an ancient stone totem pole, brought from Alaska. From here, at night, the view is unforgettable—almost a thousand feet above sea level. Myriads of stars twinkling like fireflies reach down to the Pacific. The inside of the house which the newlyweds used mostly is built round a hexagonal central hall, and the white drawing room is reached by steps surmounted by white gates. All the rooms have beamed ceilings, and ancient masterpieces of art brought from trips abroad adorn the walls. In the hall brass sconces reach out from blue-and-gold hemispheres.

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The first object that meets the eye as one enters the Barrymore living room is a beautiful bust in profile by Paulanship, which rests on the center of the mantelpiece. John had given this to Michael Strange as a surprise gift when she returned from one of her many trips abroad. The family crest is carved in the woodwork of the fireplace. At one end of the large room stands a grand piano, upon which rest the family portraits; a long refectory table is at the other end, and serves as a dining table. There is an old tavern with a bar transported at great cost from an Alaskan mining town. The music room has a handsome chandelier from the palace of an Austrian archduke valued at about \$8,500, and on the lawn is a sun and moon dial, given to John by McGill University in appreciation of his beautiful performance as Peter Ibbetson.

There is a story attached to the transportation of this sundial which should be told here. When the Peter Ibbetson Company left Canada for New York with a truckload of baggage, the sundial, weighing more than two hundred pounds exclusive of packing case, had been added to John's equipage. At the Canadian border, the train was stopped for inspection of luggage. All went well until the sundial was uncovered.

"Sorry, sir, can't take antiques into the United States," the inspector declared. The discussion became so heated that John decided to continue the journey and leave Paul, his

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general "straighten-outer," in charge of transporting the precious antique. Paul found that it had to be sealed and bonded, with all papers ready by midnight, giving him about two hours in which to do this.

John meantime had wired him: "Bring sundial at all costs. If necessary, my friend Lord O'Shaughnessy will represent you in court. In New York, you will be met by Mr. Thomas Patten, Postmaster of New York, who will see you through." There was no need of a representative in court, and eventually the sundial, which had been brought from France when the first missionaries landed in Quebec, after many adventures found itself in the beautiful grounds of the Barrymore estate.

On his travels, and during the years of work, John had picked up many art treasures, including a collection of armor weighing many hundreds of pounds. It was no wonder that he wanted a large place to put them in. His library was very extensive and valuable. The magnificent carved oaken doors in this room are twelve inches thick and came from Italy. Several thousands of books line the walls, and of these he is inordinately proud. He owns several priceless first editions, including an *Alice in Wonderland*. He once told a reporter, "I don't mind wives leaving me, but I do strenuously object to their taking along my first editions." One wife, who shall be nameless, walked out on him with a Froissart "that was practically my last kidney."

## John Barrymore

That is how he feels about his books. Many of them date from pre-Gutenberg days. A framed letter from Abraham Lincoln to Louisa Drew, and another from George du Maurier to John have places of honor.

John owns a gun collection, considered to be the finest west of the Mississippi, and the result of over twenty years of interest. It consists of dueling pistols, elephant guns, flintlocks, muzzle loaders, Maxim silencers, early blunderbusses, and the latest Lüggers. As for the trophy house, it is a museum of its own, crammed to overflowing with furred and feathered victims of John's gun prowess. Here you see a leopard skin, a stuffed giant tortoise, part of the vertebrae of a whale, picked up from the sands of Ascuncion Bay, the skin and skeleton of a five-hundred-pound marlin swordfish, stuffed birds and stuffed fish. A year later a stuffed crocodile was to be added, shot by Dolores herself off Galápagos Islands.

Of his trophies, John values most a dinosaur's egg, given him by Professor Roy Chapman Andrews. As John says, "It's a very good present for an actor." In his backyard he has a special field for skeet shooting, and many a happy hour has he spent among his friends at this sport. Clark Gable is a frequent visitor to this field, and countless good stories pass between them. There is also an aerated pool on his estate, in which the finest trout have been planted, so that if

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Dolores wanted a trout for dinner, John had but to take down his fishing rod.

Should Dolores have grown tired of seeing stuffed animals, her husband had a collection of eleven cats, very much alive, including one Siamese. He also had eleven beautiful greyhounds, and when the Siamese queen of feline sleekness arrived, he boyishly placed her in the middle of the circle of greyhounds to see what would happen. After considerable thought, and with much dignity, the cat proceeded to spit at each, until she had them completely under control. From then on she was undisputed boss. There were also nine other dogs, ranging from St. Bernards to Kerry-blue terriers. Three of the older animals had been born during an earthquake and were called Shake, Quake, and Shock. A tame opossum, a South American kinkajou, and an oriole that ate breakfast with John every morning, completed what might be called the inner circle of the animal kingdom on Barrymore's little farm! There were also three hundred different specimens of flora and fauna. Ten servants were needed to keep the estate in proper order.

Such was the house that welcomed the bride. John was as happy as a sand boy and felt at last that this treasury of natural, scientific, and literary curiosities was at last a real home.

The newlyweds set out on a belated honeymoon aboard

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the *Mariner*, as soon as Dolores' picture was finished. They set sail for Guayaquil, Ecuador, with the first stop at Panama. They visited the Island of Cocos, remaining in Ecuador for ten days, and had the thrill of hunting lizards in the River Daule. This was merely an introduction to future sport. Later they were to hunt crocodiles in the Galápagos, and to catch more marlin swordfish, weighing up to a hundred and fifty pounds. When they were on their way back to Hollywood they stopped at Balboa, where they found a huge crowd had gathered to greet them. Some of those people had stood in the broiling sun on the hot open pier for hours, just to catch a glimpse of the famous actor and his bride.

Another time, when the *Infanta* docked at La Paz, it happened to be the day on which General Ruffo's sister was to be married. The general was a millionaire tomato grower. The moment he found out who owned the yacht, he sent a pressing invitation to John to be a guest. He accepted, and from the moment of his arrival, the affair was turned into a reception for *him*, with the bridal party for background.

During 1929, John completed two pictures, *Eternal Love* and *The Song of Songs*, and in 1930 *The Man from Blankley's*. He loved to come home after a hard day at the studio. There was nothing of the gay blade about him; in fact, he was usually seen shuffling about in a pair of old bedroom slippers and a much-worn pair of gray pants, which had no shape left in them. He has long forgotten when or

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where the slippers were purchased, so ancient are they.

He was particularly happy now, for two reasons. First, the stork was on its way to the Barrymore residence, and, second, he had just signed with Warners to do *Moby Dick*, a talking version of *The Sea Beast*, which had proved to be the great success John had prophesied. The adaptation of the Melville classic was made by J. Grubb Alexander and was directed by Lloyd Bacon.

Once again there was trouble about the whale. This time, no less than twelve thousand dollars were spent by the prop department on a lifesize replica of the aquatic mammal. According to plans, two men could make the creature do dives, tip-ups, and blow. At the launching in San Pedro harbor, two operators were about to shut themselves inside, when someone suggested that it might be a sensible precaution to find out if the thing could float. It didn't, and it still lies at the bottom of the harbor, where, no doubt, the enormous visitor was treated with amazed curiosity by the other inhabitants of the sea. Finally, the whale scenes were done in miniature, as in *The Sea Beast*. Joan Bennett played the heroine, succeeding Dolores in the same part.

The agonized yell which Barrymore emitted, when in the role of Captain Ahab, as they saw the stump of his leg, which was bitten off by the white whale, was the most blood-curdling sound the talking pictures have ever produced. *Moby Dick* was essentially a man's picture, full of grog and



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cursing, especially cursing. In this, John was at his best; in fact, such a vocabulary of swear words has he that whenever there is a Barrymore conference no woman is allowed to sit in.

When cameras and sound machines started to grind, John began his lines, "Gentlemen, a fine bunch of cutthroats you are—" At that moment a cock crew somewhere, ruining the shot—and realizing this, John continued, not knowing that the sound machine was still going. What the record said is not fit for publication. A few of the scenes were shot under water, and some would-be wit said that Barrymore swallowed more water during the filming of this story than he ever had before in his life.

With his new wealth, John purchased a hundred-and-ten-foot yacht designed by L. E. Geary. The boat had a nine-foot draft and was powered by two Diesel engines, and required a crew of thirteen men. She was named the *Infanta*, in honor of the expected addition to the family. She had sleeping quarters for eight guests. Here was John's supreme joy. He was master of a floating palace; nothing was missing. He even grew real mint in a mint bed, so that his guests could have fresh mint juleps.

On one of the *Infanta's* trips John painted a beautiful portrait of his third wife, which was later daubed over by a jealous member of the fair sex.

On April 8, 1930, Dolores entered the Good Samaritan

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Hospital, and John took a room next hers. He was still working on *Moby Dick*, and by the end of the day was very tired. So exhausted was he that when the nurse entered his room and woke him during the night to announce the arrival of a daughter, he sat up—a rather fearful figure with matted hair and a straggly beard—gave the timid and starched woman a resounding kiss, and inquired if all was well with Dolores. Upon being reassured, he turned over and went to sleep.

John now ceased to be restless and became a thoroughly domesticated papa. He was the fond parent who rushes home to fondle his new baby. His work took second place; he could not get back quickly enough to his little Dolores Ethel Mae.

Yet it must not be forgotten that Barrymore was not new to the joys of fatherhood. He had a lovely little daughter, now five years old. But since celebrating her birth by getting the domestic staff inebriated, he had seen very little of her. When Diana was but two years old, John had started a collection of autographs for her by asking the cast of the Players Club second annual revival to sign the program. This included such famous names as John Drew, McKay Morris, Charles Richman, Etienne Girardot, John Craig, Grant Mitchell, Francis Wilson, Walter Hampden, Henry Dixey, Albert Bruning, Albert G. (Bogie) Andrews, Ernest Lawford, Robert Mantell, Reinald Werrenrath, Ethel Barry-

## John Barrymore

more, Viola Kemble Cooper, Charlotte Walker, and Carroll McComas. Diana was kept from her father, but little Dolores for the next nine years was to be a great joy to him.

John was so happy about his new daughter that he went on shopping orgies, buying the most expensive infant dresses that could be obtained. He told his friends that he was glad the baby was a girl. "With a daughter I can be just a pal; but with a son, I'd be wondering what jail he was in all the time." He called his wife "Winkle" and the baby "Squeegy," and when Squeegy grew old enough to appreciate them John would sit for hours at the side of her cot telling her fairy stories.

Barrymore now signed a five-year contract with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, although Warners gave him a higher salary. The latter paid a hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars for each picture, plus fifty thousand cash, against a certain percentage of the profits, while Metro signed him at a flat hundred and fifty thousand for *Arsène Lupin*, in which both the Barrymores were to appear. John furnished the romantic interest as the handsome French duke whose crooked career baffled the police, while Lionel, who had just received the Academy Award, was cast as the detective. Karen Morley, whose beauty and talent for acting John quickly recognized, portrayed a girl detective.

It was an old-fashioned story, really a rehashing of *Raffles*, the amateur cracksman, a picture in which John had ap-

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peared away back at the beginning of the century, when D. W. Griffiths ran the old Biograph Studio on Fourteenth Street in New York and the silent movies were having growing pains. This very picture, *Raffles*, much the worse for wear, was shown by the Museum of Modern Art during the run of *My Dear Children* at the Belasco Theatre in Forty-fourth Street, one night after the show, to the unrestrained amusement of John himself, Elaine Barrie, his fourth wife, and the entire company.

It was interesting to note that the characteristics and mannerisms which John used in those early days are still very much in evidence. "Just the same old ham then as I am now!" he shouted. When the picture showed him taking a genuine leap from the rails of a liner in midocean, he told the onlookers that he did not know at the time that the said ocean was full of sharks. In the cast of *Raffles* were Cooper Cliffe and Ralph Morgan. It was interesting to see them as slim young men. John was particularly intrigued with the far from slender, or young, leading "heavy woman," who so mercilessly tracked him down, because he had no recollection of ever having seen her before. Everyone was amused at the old-fashioned technique of acting before the camera, which made every actor look as though he had a severe attack of St. Vitus' Dance.

Jack Conway, who directed *Arsène Lupin*, has always had the greatest admiration for John as an actor, but was a bit

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apprehensive when given this assignment, for he too had been told things about the Barrymore temperament. His own description of John is that he is a peach and a demon for work. Conway adds that he never knew an actor more keenly critical of his own mistakes.

In order to be near his work, John took quarters in a rambling old building modeled after a Spanish mission house. One day, an MGM reporter called at this place to interview the star, and found he had left without a word to anyone, to inspect his coffee plantation in Guatemala. However, winter saw the picture finished and the Barrymores on their way southward on an exploration expedition.

They had set out in quest of unusual birds and fish. Their first port of call were the Galápagos, volcano-made islands in the Pacific, seven hundred and thirty miles off the west coast of Ecuador. One day John, in an adventurous mood, scaled a lava peak, and came across a vulture's lair. He found in it a tiny king condor. When he returned to the *Infanta* with his prize, and in a state of excitement, he found that he had committed a *faux pas*, and that the natives were up in arms. John was told the natives have a superstition on the island that the capture of one of these birds will bring disaster. Of course, John paid no attention when they begged him to release his captured prize, and he personally saw to the feeding of this ugly creature, which he named "Mr. Maloney." On another exciting day, Dolores captured the

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crocodile which eventually found his smiling way into the trophy room at Tower Road.

Less than a month after their return from this adventurous trip, with more than a dozen captures—some alive and some awaiting the taxidermist, John was taken seriously ill. For weeks he lay in a high fever, caused by a mysterious tropical malady. It was suggested by several friends that Mr. Maloney should go, but John had actually trained that ugly bald-headed creature to kiss him. There was that bond of understanding between them which he has exercised over every animal or bird that ever came into his possession. Mr. Maloney was certainly not going.

It was some long time before Barrymore was able to go back to the studio, but once he had started, discretion as to his health was thrown to the winds and he worked all day on a very strenuous picture, *Svengali*, an adaptation from George du Maurier's book, *Trilby*.

There is an amusing story about a trick he played on Professor Einstein during the filming of this picture. The great scientist was visiting the lots, and one of John's pals, a property man by the name of Limey Piers, who was a great autograph hunter, begged Barrymore to get Einstein's signature for him. He presented the man's autograph book to the Professor, saying that his great friend Admiral Limey Piers had been unable to attend the reception given in his honor, but would so much like him to write something in

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his book. "What shall I write?" asked Professor Einstein. "Oh, the admiral is a good scout," said John, "and doesn't like any fuss. Leave off his title—just say, 'to Limey.' "

Marion Marsh played Trilby in this picture, the girl who falls under the spell of the evil genius, Svengali, and once again Barrymore played a character part, that of the strange and sinister hypnotist, to absolute perfection.

As might be expected, overwork brought on another attack of the jungle fever, and there were times during the weeks that followed when his life was despaired of. The doctors who attended him suggested a cruise as soon as he was able to leave his bed. In June, the three Barrymores set out on the *Infanta* for Alaska. A small cabin was specially built for baby Dolores, for her father was anxious that his daughter should get her sea legs as soon as possible. They landed at Juneau, and drove through muskeg willow thickets, past salmon streams, until they reached Kodiak, with its Russian church and white cottages. Within a few weeks Papa Barrymore was feeling well enough to hunt bear on Kodiak Island. It was on Lisianski Beach that he faced death in a startling manner.

He was taking motion pictures, when a bear, weighing more than a ton, charged at him. This was the time of the year when the Alaskan brown bears are in search of food. He stopped the huge brute with two shots, fired at about a distance of twenty-five yards. The same furry gentleman's

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head now adorns the trophy room at the Tower Road museum, and there's a mean look in that bear's eye every time John passes it.

Stories about animals and birds must be interwoven in Barrymore chronicles, for as we know they are part of the family tradition, although John never got so far as to be thrown out of hotels on account of his pets, as his father had been. Every time Lionel saw the huge vulture, Mr. Maloney, enfold its wings round his brother, and put its beak up to John's mouth to kiss him, a shudder would pass through Lionel, and he would beg of John to let the bird go free. Finally John's compassion, and Lionel's urging, wore him down, and he decided to liberate the cause of the contention, but not in California; it must be taken to its native surroundings. This was done on a subsequent trip, but as the yacht sailed away, they could see Mr. Maloney strutting up and down the sands in great agitation. At sea later, they found that the faithful bird had flown out to rejoin them. For years he reigned supreme on the beautiful aviary provided for him on John's estate.

On another of his frequent trips to the south, Barrymore escaped a hideous death in the quicksands. He was alone, and was beginning to accept his catastrophic encounter with the inevitable, when he noticed a few weak branches above him. Grasping them, he began to draw himself up slowly and cautiously, knowing that if they broke, the game was up.



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But they didn't and he was saved from an untimely and horrible end.

He seems to have a charmed life, for John has escaped death at least five times. One of these occasions was when he was about to take an airplane trip. The pilot at the last minute decided to go up alone to make sure the engine was in perfect order. He did so, and crashed; the poor fellow was killed, and the machine was in pulp.

Barrymore was now signed up with RKO to do *State's Attorney*, written by Gene Fowler and Rowland Brown. It was John's first great modern American role, beginning as a tough Irish lad brought up in a reformatory school and ending up as prosecutor of his former pals. Helen Twelvetrees played opposite him, and John seemed to enjoy himself in this story of love and the law, and how he used both as a ladder to fame and power, winning women with kisses (John's favorite indoor sport), and swaying juries with tricks. In both he gave a real Barrymore performance.

Again he was signed by MGM for the most sensational star picture ever made, including such names as Garbo, Joan Crawford, Lionel and John, and Wallace Beery. This was the first encounter of the prince of the Royal Family with beautiful Greta Garbo. The gentleman in question admits that he was just about as scared of acting with her as she was with him, but that from the time he shook hands with her in acknowledgment of the director's introduction there

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was no feeling of uneasiness between them. The moment he started work with her, he realized the greatness of her art and the enchantment of her personality. Her consideration for others has always been a spoke in her wheel of charm. She broke a long-standing rule of hers—that of leaving the set promptly at five o'clock—to accommodate John, and on the last day, when he was due to start a new picture on the following morning, she worked very late into the night so that they might finish their scenes together.

Garbo played the part of the ballet dancer in the picture, which necessitated the taking of dancing lessons. John was watching her one day, going through the routine, and she whispered to him. "I veel sooch a cow!"

*William Daniels, the young director, was greatly in sympathy with the Swedish girl, who came to this country so bewildered and inexperienced. Many of the Hollywood sophisticates had looked askance at the new arrival, who could then scarcely speak English, but not Bill. He saw the great art that was lying dormant in the girl, and never laughed at her mistakes. "Applesauce" was the first slang expression she picked up, and whenever Daniels would ask her what was her opinion on such and such a picture, she would answer, "Applesauce."*

One day, after Bill Daniels had finished shooting an important love scene, which took place on a sofa, between Garbo and John, she insisted the whole set be rearranged—

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during lunch hour, too—for she had suddenly realized that the favorite side of John's profile had not been facing the camera.

Another time, John arrived on the set not feeling at all well, but, in spite of this, ready for a hard day's work. At the first opportunity, Garbo said to him, "Ah, you do not veel so gud today. Come to my dressing room, I haf something for you." John followed her to her portable room, where he was met by an enormous colored woman named Ellen, who was Garbo's maid. Orders were given for an Irak punch. "Now you will veel gud in a few minutes," she said.

John declares it was the most wonderful drink he had ever tasted—and he is quite an expert. Meanwhile, every minute off the set was costing MGM a thousand dollars. Director Goulding was getting pretty irritated, but they appeased his anger by doing the scenes that followed in record time.

Barrymore says it is her simplicity that makes Garbo's great success, that same simplicity that marked the genius of Ellen Terry and Modjeska, who was Lionel's godmother. Although many people think her desire to be alone is just a stunt thought up by the publicity department, those who have worked with her, and know her, realize that her art is all-absorbing and complete. She does not even want to talk between scenes; she pours her whole soul into her part. Her

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timidity is not a pose, and when she is finished she runs like a frightened hare to her dressing room. People disturb her when she is playing a part. John says she has eyes like a boa constrictor and can see anyone strange on the set immediately, even although most of the rehearsals for the Garbo-Barrymore scenes were done in darkness save for a diffusion of red floodlights. She once ordered a man off the set because he was watching her. Garbo's embarrassment must have been considerable when John told her that the offending man was Arthur Brisbane, one of the most powerful newspapermen in the world. (Incidentally, the same man who had fired John as a cartoonist and told him to try acting.) *Grand Hotel* turned out to be the supreme picture of the year, and was not shown on the road, at popular prices, for twelve months. John hopes to see Garbo play *Thais* some day.

As Hilary Fairfield in the *Bill of Divorcement* (the shell-shocked husband, who returns home to find his wife has divorced him and is about to remarry), John once again showed his artistry by painting on the canvas of his own personality a new and inspired characterization. Many critics agreed that he was given an opportunity for the most magnificent performance of his movie career, and made the most of it. Billie Burke found the role of Margaret Fairfield one of the most difficult she had been called upon to play. She says John was so fascinating that it was difficult to turn

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down his love-making convincingly. The quality of his voice reminded her of his Uncle John Drew, who many years before, in a play called *My Wife*, led her to the footlights for her first bow.

There have been several versions of *A Bill of Divorcement* in the movies, but no one has played the final scene, where Hilary and his daughter thump the piano together in a state of exuberance, with such pathos as Barrymore.

The Barrymores are never very lavish in their praise of one another, but Ethel's criticism of her brother in this part was, "You're very good in this one—you're not an ass."

Although the success of this picture started Katharine Hepburn (who played the daughter) on her screen career, she never really got along on the set with John. The story goes that when the last of their scenes was shot, Katie turned to Barrymore and said, "Thank God, I don't have to act any more with you," to which he replied, "I didn't know you ever had, darling."

*THE HAPPY FAMILY—FIRST MILLION*

ETHEL HAD TAKEN A PALATIAL HOME IN BEVERLY HILLS FOR herself and her three grown children, Samuel Colt, twenty-two years old, Ethel Barrymore Colt, twenty, and John Drew Colt, eighteen. There was a beautiful garden, a swimming pool, tennis courts, and horses to ride. Ethel's daughter, known as "Sis" or "Chi-Chi" by the family, in spite of all these outdoor attractions, continued with her voice lessons. Despite her later becoming manager of the Jitney Players, she hopes to carry on the family tradition in another branch of the art—opera.

The three Colt children had seen very little of their Uncle Jack during the years that followed their childhood. Their last vivid recollection of him was after the showing of the motion picture *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. They had been taken to see it by their mother, who pushed their heads down every time the handsome Dr. Jekyll began his ghastly

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metamorphosis into the animallike Mr. Hyde. But they saw enough.

Their Uncle Jack was guest at dinner that night when they returned home. They could eat nothing, hardly daring to take their eyes from his face, fearing that at any moment he might turn into the dreadful creature which had frightened them so much that afternoon. Sis remembers her Uncle Jack, sitting on the end of her bed for hours, trying to calm her fears with a description in detail of how the make-up man at the studio used to transform him, and endeavoring to convince her that he was still the same uncle who used to sit on the floor with her, in that same house in Mamaroneck, and read aloud the "Tarzan" books to their mutual delight.

Many nights in Hollywood they dined *en famille* with John and Dolores, or lunched *en masse* at Ethel's house. Sometimes it seemed that her garden was full of Barrymores of all ages, and it was here that the famous photograph of the entire Barrymore clan from John Junior to Lionel was taken, the only time the Royal Trio and their descendants got together.

It is a strange thing how few are the letters which have passed between the various branches of this family. If someone wished to make a collection of Barrymore belles-lettres, he would have a sorry time trying to find them. Sis says she never remembers receiving an initial missive from her Uncle

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Jack, but she does remember an answer to one which she sent to him when she was a schoolgirl in the convent on Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia, asking if he would help a friend of hers who had just arrived in Hollywood. The mere fact of getting an answer from her uncle was a surprise to her, but there was a bigger one to come. It was in the form of a telegram, which by some mischance fell into the hands of one of the sisters. It began: "By some strange gymnastics of the Holy Ghost, I opened your letter and read it . . ."

Uncle John has never written to Sis since.

There was excitement, on two scores, in the Barrymore family in the spring of 1932. A new arrival was expected before long to grace the ménage, and Ethel was to come to Hollywood for her first movie, *Rasputin and the Empress*. She was to share acting honors for the first time in her life with her two brothers, although she and Lionel had appeared together.

Ethel had turned a deaf ear to Hollywood offers for years. As John put it, "Lionel and I see no debasing of our so-called art, when we allow our histrionic antics to be recorded on celluloid and packed in tin cans like pineapple, to be shipped to all parts of the world. We feel it is better to appear in five thousand movie houses at once, before a million patrons, than in one theater before a thousand. But Ethel doesn't see it that way. She can't stand having just a



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cameraman and his satellites for an audience." No wonder Louis B. Mayer was congratulating himself for MGM.

It might be interesting to state *en passant* that Ethel's first movie experiences were not episodes that she remembers with pleasure. Having always acted on the stage, she found it horribly embarrassing to act on location—which in the days of 1918 often meant in the street. A mob of popeyed onlookers would take their free fill of famous actors and actresses, while they were kept back by police and heavy ropes. John had never minded outdoor publicity; on the contrary, he reveled in the plaudits of the crowd if it was a merry one. But Ethel was driven almost crazy by outdoor performances, and one day shrieked her refusal to act the part of an Italian street singer in front of her friend, Mrs. Whitelaw Reid's, house on Madison Avenue. The locale had to be moved, for one does not argue with a Barrymore, especially Ethel! Lionel, who is an experienced director himself, is said to have pitied the poor son-of-a-gun who was to direct them—meaning the three Barrymores. Charlie Brabin got the unenviable assignment. Ethel received a great welcome upon her arrival at Pasadena with her three children; in fact, half the celebrities of Hollywood assembled to do her honor, none more sincerely than John. She met everyone on Stage 21 of the MGM lot, on the morning of the first shooting of the picture, giving a specially warm greeting to Edward Arnold, with whom she had



*In Private Life*



PHOTO  
DIANA BARRYMORE  
BLYTHE

DONC





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played on many occasions on Broadway. She threw her arm round Charles Brabin's neck, and told him how glad she was that he was going to direct her. All went well until one day an assistant director told her she was late. Then there were fireworks on the lot. Ethel also resented her brothers' superior knowledge of motion-picture technique. After retaking a scene three times because she was over-acting, she was asked once more to do it. For a reason best known to herself, she refused, and flew in to Mr. Mayer's office, protesting loudly. After a little persuasion she resumed, and things were going along beautifully until the supervisor made a correction. He was an official from the Russian court, who had known Her Majesty the late Empress personally. Ethel was impersonating her, but, of course, no one knew that she too had been presented to the empress. It was at the time of Queen Victoria's funeral in England.

After this fact was made known, things were on a different basis. John had at one time a great many letters from one of the Czar's aunts (the grand duchess whom he had met in Paris) but, unfortunately, they have been lost. This matriarch of the Russian court was seventy-six years old, and spoke with distress of the new faction that was springing up, and how disturbed "Nicky" was about it. What wonderful letters those must have been! The writer fled to Italy when the royal family was killed, and she died there.

There were a hundred and one stories floating around

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about the mad Barrymores biting up scenery, and then one another, in fits of jealousy, but there was no truth in any of them. In fact, all concerned agreed that there had never been less evidence of clashing temperaments. Such remarks as John's in speaking of his brother's work may have started these rumors; John shoots Lionel at the end of the picture, and when the late Irving Thalberg told John this, he remarked, "The way Lionel is going to steal this picture, I ought to shoot him in the first reel, not the last."

Everyone was very tired when this picture was finished, for there had been endless story trouble. The whole movie is referred to in Hollywood as "Disputin' and the Empress." Ethel is reputed to have said when she saw her first talkie rushes, "I look like Elsie Janis's burlesque of me."

They were weeks behind schedule; other members of the cast, whose work was finished, and who were back on the Great White Way, had to be recalled for a further twelve weeks of shooting. Ethel and her family returned to New York for the world première, which took place at the Astor Theatre on December 23, 1932, before a brilliant audience. The picture was hailed as a masterpiece by the critics.

In the meantime, the John Barrymores became the parents of a son, born on June 4, 1932, amid great rejoicing. The baby was christened John Blythe Barrymore at St. Andrew's Church, Pasadena, by Father James O'Shea. All the Barrymores were present, except Ethel. At least it was a comfort

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to know that baby John would not have to worry about finances, for his father had made his first million at this time. Everything that could be was lavished upon the children by their fond parents. John is a great believer in looking out for posterity. For years he had tried to become a member of the exclusive Tuna Club of Catalina, and for years one of the other members blackballed him. At last, the objector died, and John bounced in. "History shall not repeat itself," he murmured as he filed papers with the committee for membership for his week-old son. He told his friends that he hoped his son would reflect the excellent traits of the more admirable members of the family and not resemble his father more than was absolutely necessary.

It was not so long after the arrival of John Junior that his papa was once again attacked by the mysterious fever that seemed to bob up on the least provocation. His doctor ordered a complete rest, and John suggested a leisurely cruise on the waters of the North Pacific. The medical man approved, and the ménage entrained for San Francisco, en route to Victoria, B. C., where the *Infanta* awaited them. Once again they visited Alaska, this time with Dolores, two children, a physician, a secretary, and nurses for the babies.

By the time they reached Ketchikan, John was feeling much better; even well enough to join some friends in a fishing party. There are few sailors like Barrymore, who will take a trip up the coast to Alaska and down again as



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far as Galápagos Islands and even to Hawaii, and then tell you he won't be satisfied until he cruises down to Australia to fish for the marlin that abound in those waters. After all, if one owns a palatial quarter-million-dollar seagoing schooner equipped with every possible gadget, and one has the reputation of being the oldest of the sea salts on the movie colony—why not?

He loved to have his family on the cruises with him—no prouder papa ever existed. His boast was that baby John had the longest eyelashes and hair that he had ever seen on anyone so young, and when the small gentleman in question used to announce with a loud yell that it was high time for a bottle, John would say, "Ah, he's turning on the family temperament. It won't be long before we have a big emotional scene."

A few years later, after Dolores had obtained her divorce, John called one day at the house to see his children, but their mother refused him entrance. This he remembers as one of the saddest moments of his life.

After this trip to Alaska, Barrymore returned to Hollywood feeling better than he had in a long time and quite ready for work. His next picture was *Topaze*, another RKO, in which he played a timid schoolmaster in a French school. He believes naively that people really practice the moral maxims that he teaches, and later finds out, to his amazement, that dishonesty quite often is the quickest way to

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success. Myrna Loy played the feminine role. *Topaze* was an entirely new type of part for Barrymore. His face was so framed in whiskers—like a frilled ham—it was hard to tell that this was the man who owned the famous profile.

Following this, a new contract was signed with MGM, and work was begun on *Reunion in Vienna*, in which Diana Wynyard costarred. Here was another role after John's heart, a swashbuckling ex-archduke. A characterization in which he could be slightly mad, fantastic, subtle, and sophisticated, all at once. In a café kitchen scene, in this picture, he wore a Tyrolean costume, in which he looked equally as dashing as in the immaculate military uniform of a Viennese prince. After seeing this, one understands why he was at his comedy best in *My Dear Children* when garbed in a Tyrolean outfit. It seems to be the cue for him to cut up.

In the stage play he gesticulated, hopped, pranced, and even yodeled—an accomplishment at which he excels—and styled himself "The Clown Prince," a title which would not have far missed the truth in the role he was now acting, that of a former prince of Austria, whose chief amusement lay in slapping the ladies of his acquaintance.

This feature particularly appealed to Alfred Lunt, in the stage version of *Reunion* when Lynn Fontanne was at the receiving end. Mr. Lunt cheerfully admitted that he had never had such a swell chance to pound his wife. Maybe

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Lynn Fontanne's husband knows how, but John is a dangerous slapper, because he does not realize that he is still using the tactics taught him by his boxing-expert father, and does not appreciate his strength. The only person who made him realize it, very forcibly, was Elaine Barrie, his fourth wife. She left him once on account of it.

The genie of mischief was never far away from Barrymore, and he had but to rub the metaphorical lamp to summon him to his aid. At one time, when he was occupying a bungalow in Hollywood, he gave a large party. He was particularly anxious to invite his friend James Kirkwood, who lived not far away. But Kirkwood was recovering from concussion of the brain, the result of a riding accident, and his wife would not allow him out. There was nothing John could do but fetch Kirkwood himself, promising Mrs. Kirkwood that there would be no liquor served to him on account of his head.

By 2 A.M. Jimmy was the only one completely sober, but as morning wore on, he caught up on the festivities. Someone suggested seeing who was the strongest among the guests. When it came to his turn, Kirkwood lifted a heavy chair, and promptly fainted. John then played a practical joke. They undressed the poor man, carried him outside and laid him on the Ambassador Hotel lawn, placed a sheet over him, put a bunch of flowers on top, and lighted candles on either side of him. They then sent for his wife, to come

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and fetch him. When she arrived, they led her to the recumbent figure on the lawn, and the poor lady nearly died of fright. The episode ended amicably, but one wonders if she has ever really forgiven the perpetrator.

When John was asked if he were ever going to reform, he replied that he had not "taken the veil," but that he had been behaving his very best since he had married a wife so beautiful as Dolores.

Following *Reunion in Vienna*, MGM produced *Night Flight*, an aviation drama, in which Helen Hayes, Clark Gable and Lionel costarred with John. He played the airline manager. The villain in this piece was the weather. It howled over the Andes to defeat the manager's plan to fly the night mail in spite of it. It was a spectacular romance based on the prize novel of the same name, and aimed at showing the suspense endured by wives who wait while their husbands fly over the ocean. John and Lionel had a lot of fun in this picture, trying to steal scenes from each other.

We next see John preparing for a back-to-nature vacation in the Yosemite. He rented a large cottage in the Ahwahnee grounds for the family, retinue, and fishing rods. Once they had arrived and the family was settled, Barrymore took a taxi and drove thirty-six miles to the Big Trees, taking with him a sleeping bag, in which he spent the night under a giant Sequoia.

One wonders what were his thoughts as he lay under that

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towering ageless tree, her arms spread into heaven, and the spell of the far-distant stars above him? If he allowed his mind to journey back into the past, reviewing the panorama of a life of fifty years, what a variety of experiences and events would come crowding in! Himself in a sailor suit, with Lionel, devouring expensive pastries, at Delmonico's. . . . An unhappy, hungry youngster, in an English boarding school, awaiting the arrival of his father, and his great disappointment when he found that his father had arrived, got into an interesting conversation with the headmaster about boxing, and gone without seeing him. . . . At Chicago, reading his notices in *Magda*, one of which said, "A young man named John Barrymore walked about the stage like someone who had been dressed up and forgotten." . . . Daniel Frohman telling him to get a year's experience on the stage, and then he would give him a part. . . . At Dieppe, in faultless tweeds, lunching with Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, Maurice Maeterlinck, Max Beerbohm, Gerald du Maurier, Coquelin, Constance Collier, and her mother. . . .

As he lay dreaming under that mighty tree, things of the past would mingle, willy-nilly, with events of the present; recollections of the baronial halls in England, where he was so frequently a guest; the beautiful castle of the Duke of Buccleuch, where he met the young Prince Edward, afterward King Edward VIII; the casino at Deauville with Michael Strange, the bright scintillating crowd, the waltzes,

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the tinkling of ice in glasses; climbing Mont Blanc, and receiving a medal for it; being photographed with his baby daughter Diana in her long clothes; meeting the portly Count Tolstoy and swallowing his comments on *Redemption*; thinking of Elsie Janis's two-year plan of marriage, wherein a wife should be satisfied with two years of happiness, and a baby, then calling it a day, and stepping aside gracefully for her successor, and wondering if it were not a damn good system for wives. . . .

Hollywood with its conglomeration of real mountains and painted skies, its papier-mâché houses on wheels, and the beautifully planned estates. . . . Parties with Charlie Chaplin, and stealing Chaplin's thunder by imitating him, to Charlie's delight. . . . Driving up-hill, a thousand feet overlooking the reservoir, finding the car out of control, looking at the chasm below, praying harder than ever before in his life, and missing death by a flash. . . . Playing "Michigan" with Lionel for hours on end, neither speaking a word. . . . Supper with Chaliapin, in London. . . . Meeting with Nijinski in Mexico. . . . Moments of private chaos, triumphs, fits of uncontrollable temper, then, in a sort of miasma, the whispering voices of Dolores and the doctor, above his head: "Dangerously ill." . . .

Then a memory at which he chuckled: Leading Winston Churchill past an entire company of stars and fellow actors on a Hollywood sound stage, to introduce the famous Brit-

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ish statesman to Tiny Jones, a diminutive bit player, who appeared in nearly all of John's films. . . . A recollection of the first thrill of seeing his name in electric lights. . . . Wonderful plans exchanged over a studio worktable, where the brains of three men poured out a Niagara of ideas, resulting in the striking and beautiful *Hamlet*. . . .

It had been a long road from the lunch counters on Third Avenue to the supermagnificence of Hollywood.

On his return from the earthly paradise in the Yosemite, Barrymore began work upon *Dinner at Eight*, another all-star picture produced by MGM. In the cast were such names as Lee Tracy, Madge Evans, Jean Harlow, Wallace Beery, Marie Dressler, Lionel Barrymore, Edmund Lowe, Billie Burke, Jean Hersholt, Louise Closser Hale, May Robson, Grant Mitchell, and Philip Holmes. It was a story of the strangest dinner party ever given. Each of the guests has a hidden life, and in this film one saw the inner tragedies of the diversified company, and how almost every character brought about a climax which definitely moved the story along.

As most readers will recall, *Dinner at Eight* was originally written as a stage play by George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber, and ran for a whole season on Broadway. The film adaptation was by Frances Marion and Herman Mankiewicz, and the direction by George Cukor. The role of Larry

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Renault, the aging movie star whose ego leads him to believe he is still a big shot, and who ends his life by suicide, was played by John.

Cukor, who had previously directed John in the *Bill of Divorcement*, said of him that "his ability to project himself into a dramatic character, and then let that character completely transcend his own individuality; and then, to interpret it, down to the last fine shade of mood—that genius is possessed by no other actor on the screen today."

Marie Dressler, who played the part of Charlotte Vance, a grand old actress—a role which was acted by Constance Collier in the stage version on Broadway—admitted that she was as excited at the prospect of playing with John for the first time as when she had her first kiss.

There had been some speculation among Hollywoodites as to how Barrymore would get on this time with George Cukor, for it was he who had directed the stage play in New York called *The Royal Family*, which was a satire on the Barrymores. John was impersonated by Fredric March. But to prove that he is not sensitive about being caricatured, and thoroughly enjoys a good joke at his own expense, John told Cukor that he thought *The Royal Family* one of the funniest plays ever written, and that Freddy March's characterization of himself was wonderful. In fact, he told Freddy that he had shown a great deal more of John Barrymore than he liked to confess. He did think, however, that



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the presentation of both his sister and his grandmother was unfair.

In his search for plays, Barrymore often received advice from unexpected quarters. He tells of a case that happened on one of his frequent visits to New York many years ago. "I met a pert young lady of seven summers at a country club on Long Island, but I had a hangover and was sitting on the clubhouse steps. She was with several other children. I noticed that they had their heads together and were evidently discussing something of great import. One came up to me and said:

" 'You are Mr. Barrymore, aren't you?'

" 'Yes, darling.'

" 'We've just been discussing you.'

"I was interested and astonished. 'Have you reached any conclusions?' I asked.

" 'Oh, yes. We've decided you're not playing the proper roles.'

"This was really amazing. I listened to the list of things that were wrong with me, and said finally, 'Madame, your name is legion.'

" 'Oh no,' she informed me, shaking her golden curls, 'my name's Patricia Murphy.'

" 'What do you think I should play?'

"She looked at me very earnestly, and said, 'Have you heard of a novelist called W. J. Locke?'

## The Happy Family—First Million

" 'Yes.'

" 'Have you read *Septimus*?'

" 'I had to confess that I had not.

" 'There's the part for you. Why don't you do it?'

" 'Maybe I will when I get back.'

"Hearing this reassuring news, and having nothing further to add, she said, 'Good-by, Mr. Barrymore, I'm glad to have met you—now don't forget.' And she went back to join the other children.

"Returning to Hollywood I met W. J. Locke, and remembering Patricia's advice, asked him about *Septimus*, but George Arliss had prior rights, and eventually played the part."

"Out of the mouths of babes—"

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### *DOLORES RETIRES—INDIA—"TWENTIETH CENTURY"*

DIANA BARRYMORE BLYTHE WAS ABOUT EIGHT YEARS OLD when her mother's name reappeared on Broadway. This time in Rostand's beautiful play, *L'Aiglon*. It had been played successfully in Europe by the Divine Sarah, and in America by Maude Adams. Opening at Baltimore, the play got poor notices, but struggled on until it reached Broadway. When one considers that the great Sarah rehearsed *L'Aiglon* for six months, it is not to be wondered at that the second Mrs. Barrymore, Michael Strange, who had not received a great deal of direction, found the part a little beyond her powers.

John heard of his ex-wife's venture, and phoned encouragement to her from Hollywood. He had never really lost interest in her work, nor she in his. The ties of a common pursuit can bind people to each other's interests, however much of bitterness may have come between them.

Did not Michael write a play about Edgar Allan Poe

## Dolores Retires—India—"Twentieth Century"

especially for John, as late as 1924, years after they had agreed to separate? The play was never produced, because of a plagiarism claim brought against the Barrymores by Sophie Treadwell, whose play on Poe was eventually presented on Broadway by Arthur Hopkins, and was a failure.

For the sake of Diana, several attempts had been made by Michael's father to bring about a reconciliation between his daughter and John before he married Dolores. Mr. Oelrichs had, during the intervening years, met his son-in-law, and had been fascinated by his charm and intellect. But Barrymore, who protested that he had not been the one who had originally asked for the divorce, decided that things would be much happier for both parties if they remained as they were.

But to show that he will not miss a "plug" that may help anyone when the opportunity arises, he put a line into the dialogue of *My Dear Children* during the week that Michael's book came out. When in the play he is asked by a publisher to write his memoirs, and refuses, he added, "Especially now that Michael Strange has just written hers." There would have been nothing to comment upon had he made such a remark twenty years ago, when he used to tell everyone that Michael was an absolute genius.

Dolores was entirely the opposite of Michael, who could not stay quiet; always traveling, or lecturing, or entertaining, unless illness prevented her from doing anything but write.

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The current Mrs. Barrymore had decided to retire and devote her time to her children. She has never been a publicity seeker, making a point of saying as little as possible to the press at all times. She was not seen at night clubs, for John would never take her. Her beauty and sweetness made her shine above the glamor girls of that time, and John liked to keep her very much to himself. Her voice was not well suited to the talkies, and also she was wise enough to know that marriage and a family take the romance out of love-making on the screen. She did play in *The Glad Rag Doll* with James Kirkwood, after Dolores Mae was born, and later returned for one picture, called *The Passionate Sonata*, which was of no great importance.

In November 1933 Universal borrowed John from MGM to play in *Counsellor-at-Law*, taken from the stage play of that name, written by Elmer Rice, in which Otto Kruger and Paul Muni appeared in different companies. Doris Kenyon played a spoiled society wife, and Bebe Daniels the secretary.

In this play, John was a Jewish lawyer who battled his way from the slums by superhuman work to eminence in his chosen profession. The only adverse criticism was that he was too aristocratic-looking for the part. Many of the smaller roles were played by the actors who were transferred from the stage play to the screen—as one critic wrote—"thereby adding to the smoothness of this fast-moving drama." But

## Dolores Retires—India—"Twentieth Century"

he was not aware of the camera fright that had to be overcome before the scenes could be shot; even though they had played the same parts for over a year on the stage, some of these actors went to pieces before the camera, thus necessitating a hundred and one retakes.

When John returned from a cruise to British Columbia, the studio officials decided to honor him by meeting him at the train, with all the glory due to a star of his magnitude. On arrival, he looked over the assembly, and seeing a stage carpenter with whom he had been great friends, shouted to him, "Hey, you old warthog!" and insisted upon going in his shabby old Ford, which was as noisome as an iron foundry in full blast.

In the fall of 1934 John took a trip to England, thence to India, ostensibly to find his father's birthplace at Fort Agra. On the boat going out East, an Indian prince, son of one of the richest maharajahs, made friends with John and invited him as a guest to one of his father's palaces. There was also a beautiful French girl on board. John and she found in each other wonderful company. One evening after they had been having a tête-à-tête in the cocktail lounge, the prince called John aside, and warned him, "Better not talk to her too much, Mr. Barrymore. She is one of papa's 'stable.'"

John was taken aback. "But I'm only telling her some of my best jokes."

## John Barrymore

"I know, but papa's very jealous, and has eyes everywhere on this boat."

John felt the hair prickle on his neck. He had heard stories of Indian revenge before. "Why is she leaving Paris?" he asked.

The prince shrugged his shoulders. "She will be very rich."

"God knows what he meant by rich, for that poor fellow was down to his six million rupees a month," said John, when relating the story.

But Barrymore never reached Fort Agra. There were too many diversions at the Indian potentate's palace. He realized that he had only a few days left in which to find his father's birthplace, and it was much too far, so he had to abandon the idea.

He found the Indian poetess, Sarojini Naidu, an interesting personality. She was the daughter of a noted Bengali Brahman educationist. She had begun by writing verses in English, when little more than a child, and her father had sent her later to King's College, London. Here was a subject of mutual interest, and John amused her by telling her how he did *not* attend classes when he was a student there. One American woman who was also a guest at the palace took such a violent fancy to John that she drew a valuable ring from her finger and would not be satisfied until he had accepted it. He gave it to his servant the following day.

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He derived his greatest fun from taking parties of Indian girls fishing with him—never less than ten at a time. The beauty of their olive skin and the velvety darkness of their eyes, their dainty, lithe bodies, draped in gold and crimson saris, their lively chattering in the Eastern silence made an everlasting impression upon him.

It was with a certain sadness that he left the rich valleys of the Ganges River, the rock-hewn temples and Brahma's stories of creation, for the docks at Calcutta, where the *Rex* lay shimmering in the sun, ready to carry him back to present-day civilization.

*Long Lost Father* for RKO was Barrymore's next picture, with Helen Chandler, who, when last playing with John, took the part of one of the princes in the Hopkins production of *Richard III*. She now portrayed John's daughter, who takes her gay-dog father's pride down a few pegs and refuses to be reconciled to him until the end of the story.

About this time our hero again decided that he was bored with work and tired of being good, so he went off on a holiday where no one could find him. He had started a big picture for RKO and then had left them flat. When he did return eventually, he was confronted with the fact that the firm had lost two hundred and fifty thousand dollars on account of this escapade. Kenneth MacGowan was furious. John refused to straighten things out, although Dolores



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begged him to do so. It was a long time before he was back again in the good books of the movie executives.

In the part of Oscar Jaffe in Columbia's *Twentieth Century* John really shone. It was a part which thoroughly suited him; that of an eccentric, artistic, and volcanic theatrical producer, who takes a completely dumb but beautiful girl, and by working with her turns her into a success, when she promptly deserts him. After many machinations, he tricks her into signing a contract, thereby bringing her back to him.

John said of himself, "There's enough ham in me to let me actually imagine myself that old fellow. I didn't have to act to be Jaffe. I needed only to close my eyes and live over again the happiest days of my life. The character was so cleverly written that I could actually feel the peculiarities of such a man—a humbug, a faker, and a ham; but through it all, a man with a heart and a soul. We all live largely for effect. Life's a stage and we are all hams when it comes down to it, but we may, with all that, inspire others to achievements beyond their wildest expectations, as that old fellow did, in *Twentieth Century*."

Harry Cohn, president of Columbia Pictures, gave orders that John was to play the part of Jaffe exactly as he felt it. "Turn him loose, give the public an eyeful, and we'll see acting as we've never seen it before."

Carole Lombard, working with Barrymore, under the

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stimulus of his histrionic brilliance did the finest work of her career.

It is in such roles as that of Jaffe that John Barrymore finds outlet for his inveterate love of the eccentric, the whimsical, the unexpected. If he fails to find it on the stage, he isn't averse to creating opportunities in real life.

Once in a night-club at Ensenada a group of movie people were sitting at a table, making whoopee. A grubby and ill-smelling sailor, dressed in dirty white ducks, carpet slippers, and sporting a beard of a week's growth, entered. He looked about him; there was a rowdy expression in his eyes. He spotted the group, and, without further ado, shouldered his way to their table. Doffing his cap, he asked the ladies with a most charming smile if he might join them. For a moment, there was a little confusion, but one of them said it was all right with her. He sat down and ordered drinks all around. Very soon, they found him congenial company, and began to question him upon his seafaring days. He confessed to loving a sailor's life, but also that he had always had a secret longing to be an actor. This statement struck them as being very funny. "All right, get up on the stage there and do some stuff," suggested one of the ladies, "and we'll see what chances you've got."

"How about some Shakespeare?" said another.

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"I'll take you at your word," retorted the dirty sailor, and he walked onto the little stage and gave excerpts from *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Richard III*, to the delight of everyone.

"Not bad, sailor boy," chirped the merriest of the ladies, as he resumed his seat. "You might try for a walk-on sometime. I'll see what I can do for you," and she laughed uproariously.

More drinks, and after a while the dirty middle-aged man of the sea left.

About half an hour later, a smartly dressed ship's mate entered and asked the bar attendant for the proprietor, who had joined the ladies at their table. "Have you seen a rather odd-looking seaman about here lately?" he inquired.

"Why yes. Was he about fifty, with a beard?"

"That's him."

"Yes, he was here up till half an hour ago."

"He's a scream," volunteered one of the ladies. "Thinks he'd like to be an actor."

A pained expression crossed the face of the ship's mate. He sniffed, poked his chin in the air, and said, "That sailor was my boss, Mr. John Barrymore." And turning swiftly on his heel, left.

"What!" screamed one of the ladies. "That was John B—" But she had not enough breath left to finish the sentence.

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Things were not going so well in the Barrymore ménage, and John's third marriage was beginning to chill. He had found Michael Strange's restlessness more than he could endure, but now he was beginning to be bored by Dolores. No longer did he go to shops with her and buy out the entire stock of clothes for the children. He was no more the happy father. He would quote from Genesis the text which says, "It is not good for man to be alone," and then add, "But O my God, what a great relief."

He had been neglecting his home pretty steadily for some weeks and was spending a great deal of his time in the Beverly Hills Brown Derby. He was always good company, and was never seen alone. Gene Fowler, Ben Hecht, Charlie MacArthur, and Jimmy Cagney were his great friends. He generally lunched with the four of them, leaning over a table talking and laughing loudly. So loudly, in fact, that on one occasion a certain young man, who had entered the restaurant with a young lady, went to the manager and demanded that Mr. Barrymore and his friends be asked to leave. This message, being conveyed to the ringleader of the fun, so infuriated him that he loosed in a booming voice such profanity as would make any customer's hair stand on end. The worried manager sent the head waiter, who was the only one brave enough, to John's table to beg of him to stop. "That young man," he said, "is with his bride, and she is the daughter of Hollywood's chief of police." Now

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no chief of police, or no dozen chiefs of police, can silence Barrymore when he wants to speak. But in this case he had said his say, and peace prevailed.

Dolores thought she had been fairly successful in toning down her husband's vocabulary, by telling him to think of the children.

"I can't even enjoy this mildest form of dissipation," he told an acquaintance who was visiting him. "I drink only grapejuice, and am up at 8 A.M. I am beginning to like this quiet life so much that I am thinking of joining the Rotary Club and raising chickens."

On the set, if something annoyed him, he would now go into fits of temper. One day a cloak he was wearing bothered him by continually falling off, so with a loud curse, which scared some lady visitors off the lot, he tore it to shreds. All signs indicated that he was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Dolores threatened to leave their palatial home, and to live with the children in a small apartment.

John became sarcastic and bitter about his being threatened by lawyers. "I have been slapped with subpoenas, summonses, and writs all my life," he said, and added, "Love is a paper chase, and the color of the paper is blue."

Through all these troublesome times, when another marital adventure was making for the rocks, John was back at Shakespeare. On this occasion he left the love-making to

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Leslie Howard and Norma Shearer, who played Romeo and Juliet, while he tackled Mercutio.

When asked how he studied the famous Queen Mab speech, he replied, "Ten bottles of brandy," but the truth was that his mind was tired, and for the first time in his life, he found studying a real task. The late Irving Thalberg, the director, was almost in despair.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Edmond Jones chanced to be taking a holiday in Hollywood. The moment Mrs. Jones saw John, she quickly recognized the marks of frayed nerves. Once again, as in the prenatal days of the Broadway *Hamlet*, she worked with him, and Mercutio was word perfect in a few days.

When *Romeo and Juliet* was put before the public, John not only looked magnificent—his blond wig alone cost three hundred dollars—but he scored an overwhelming personal triumph.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### FOURTH MARRIAGE—CALIBAN AND ARIEL

JOHN WAS ILL AND IN A NEW YORK HOSPITAL. HIS DOMESTIC affairs were in a state of chaos. Dolores had left him and the *Infanta* for good, at Seattle, taking with her the two children and two nurses. Lawyers had unleashed an avalanche of bills, writs, and summonses. He was tired from playing Mercutio. He contracted a chill and was threatened with pneumonia. He felt lonely and depressed. And nobody seemed to care.

For fifty-three years the public had expected some kind of eccentricity from John, but when a nineteen-year-old Hunter College student from the Bronx made her way to his bedside in the hospital, and eventually into his heart, the definitely crazy period of his life began.

Elaine, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Jacobs, whose father was a New York traveling salesman, had always had a girlish admiration for John Barrymore the actor, and had a large collection of pictures, cuttings, and anecdotes of

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her hero. She was majoring in journalism at Hunter College, and was given an interview to do for the college magazine as an assignment. She seized the long-awaited opportunity to talk to her cherished idol. She was evidently not disappointed or disillusioned when she beheld the prince of moviedom, for she left his bedside in that state of excitement known as "walking on air." She had told him of her acting ambitions and of her decision to change her name to Barrie, in honor of Barrymore, for her stage career.

She cheered the patient up so much that the doctor allowed her visits to become more frequent. Once John sent out for a copy of Shakespeare, and she studied one of the plays with him. To her delight, it didn't take long for Barrymore to recover and be pronounced a convalescent. As soon as he was able to leave the hospital, Elaine and her mother took him to their home and nursed him back to health.

It was not long before John had made arrangements for a Caribbean cruise on the *Infanta*, taking Elaine and her mother with him. Upon his return he once again planned a yachting trip. This time, for some extraordinary reason, he invited Harrison Tweed (the present husband of Michael Strange), as his guest, and Diana, who was now a school-girl of fourteen. Michael also was invited, but declined. When asked why Dolores was not on board, John made the excuse that the children were too young to be left alone.



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To add insult to injury, John gave orders to the captain to call at Havana, Cuba, where Helene, who had remarried, had a charming house. Although she was away, John and his party made themselves at home.

Dolores filed two divorce suits, one of which was dismissed. There remained her suit charging cruelty and non-support of the children, and John, who was once again like a schoolboy over his conquest of the youthful Elaine, took time off from courting her to obtain a property accounting. Dolores divorced him on October 9, 1935, charging desertion, but carefully avoided mentioning Elaine's name.

Dolores never has at any time made reference to Elaine. As a matter of fact, they never even saw each other until they almost clashed at a preview of *Lloyds of London*, some years later in Hollywood. There was a call for Mrs. Dolores Barrymore's car and Mrs. John Barrymore's car. Elaine stepped into Dolores's car by mistake—and that was the nearest they ever came to meeting.

John paid up, gave Dolores one hundred and sixty-three thousand dollars and promised to pay eight hundred and sixty dollars a month maintenance for his children, until they become of age.

At this point, John made his beautiful Bel-Air home over temporarily to Elaine, with the understanding that the ownership return to John when Dolores's divorce suit was over, thus preventing Dolores's attorneys from claiming this prop-

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erty. And Elaine became the owner of a beautiful house in Bellagio Road, Bel-Air.

The love affairs of Caliban (as John called himself) and Ariel (as he dubbed Elaine) were far from dull. They consisted of quarrels which ended in positive brawls in the Jacobs apartment, John taking back an eight-carat diamond ring which he had given to his fiancée, and leaving in a great hurry for the Coast.

Elaine left no stone unturned to bring Caliban back to her side, with the help of Aaron Sapiro, her attorney. She went as far as Emporia, Kansas, to make a public appeal by radio broadcast, hoping by this means to reach John. She sobbed her love messages to him, telling him that she was waiting in Kansas City for his call. But the call never came. She returned to New York, a sadder but more determined woman.

It was not so long before she had regained him, and here is a message Caliban sent to his airy, fairy Ariel: "Dear dear lovely Rose of Sharon. Hold on to your end of a rainbow. Good night, my love. Caliban."

This love story was certainly one of the craziest that Cupid ever engineered, and, perhaps barring the King Edward and Wally Simpson romance, none has ever received such widespread publicity. Ariel and Caliban were reconciled, but there were many desperate quarrels before they finally married on November 8, 1936, in Yuma, Arizona, by Justice

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of the Peace Earl A. Freeman, at his home. Elaine's parents, the Jacobses, flew from New York, and the bridal party returned to Hollywood by rail.

When chaffed about his fourth marriage, Barrymore cited his grandmother. "She was married four times, God bless her, and was happy every other time, which is a pretty good average, considering all things. And why shouldn't romance have four bases, the same as any other World Series?"

That John has made a point never to read what the papers say about him—good, bad, or indifferent—was proved a few months after every newspaper in the world had given the Caliban-Ariel pursuit front-page publicity.

Charlie MacArthur asked Barrymore about the affair.

"How did you know about that?" asked John.

"It's been in all the papers."

"My God, Charlie, I didn't know that."

Charlie MacArthur's amazement was plainly written on his face. "Didn't you read about it?" he inquired.

"Read the papers? I haven't read a newspaper in twenty-two years," John replied cheerfully, "and after they read one of my love letters in court, I realized that no actor should read his own material."

Five months later, the Barrymores were separated. John was in Hollywood working for MGM in *Maytime*, but now only as a support to Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy. He was particularly unhappy at this time, and many stories

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of temperamental outbursts emanated from the studio. Meanwhile, Elaine went into a stock company in Boston and roused the fury of what has been called the sensible side of the clan—Ethel and Lionel—by appearing in a movie short entitled, "How to Undress in Front of Your Husband," in which she used the time-honored name of Barrymore.

The prince of the Royal Family was so angry that he openly declared he would never take her back, all of which publicity added to that which had gone before.

Ethel too was so angry that she refused to speak to her young brother again, and astonished the guests at a party by answering one of them, who had not caught her name, with the remark, "Oh, I am Ethel Barrymore; you know, Elaine Barrie's little sister!"

During the ensuing months, John played smaller parts in five pictures for Paramount, *Bulldog Drummond Comes Back*, in which he played Herman Neilson and demonstrated his versatility in disguise, appearing first as a grizzled sailor, then as a down-at-the-heels hanger-on in a Limehouse pub. In *True Confessions* he played a spooky role, a crazy criminologist, who infests taprooms and makes people laugh at various points of the story, announcing "She'll fry, she'll fry." Fred MacMurray and Carole Lombard were also in this. Such parts as these were but the shadows of the great roles John had portrayed only a few years before. *Bulldog*

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*Drummond's Revenge*, *Romance in the Dark*, and *Bulldog Drummond's Peril* followed in quick succession. The original character Bulldog Drummond had been played on the stage, many years ago, in London, by Barrymore's friend of the old days, Gerald du Maurier. John often speaks reminiscently of the Du Maurier family, and of nursing little Daphne on his knee—the child who was to take the world by storm only a few years later with her brilliant novel, *Rebecca*, a 1938 best-seller, just as *Trilby* and *Peter Ibbetson*—the fruit of her grandfather's pen—were great successes of the plush period.

Things were going badly for John. Debts were piling high. In August 1937 he went into bankruptcy and had to sell his beautiful *Infanta*, which nearly broke his heart.

One of John's greatest admirers works in the wardrobe department of MGM in Culver City. His name is Jack Rohan, and if you take a fancy to rouse Mr. Rohan's ire, just make one disparaging remark about Mr. Barrymore! When he was told, after the wardrobe tests for *Marie Antoinette*, that John had especially asked for him to take charge of his costumes, Rohan was rather uncertain of his ability to please the temperamental Barrymore, for he had heard many stories during the filming of *Maytime*. But the first moment Rohan heard John's voice, and caught the expression of his eyes, he knew that that day would mark the beginning of a very sincere friendship. Rohan's happiest



*As Others See Him*



Barrymore Off to the Studio  
BARRYMORE VIEWING  
PAINTING OF HIMSELF BY  
JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG





OF HARRY JOHNSON  
PETER IBBETSON



HARRY JOHNSON  
PETER IBBETSON







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recollections are of the powwows that took place in dressing room Number 4 in the featured players' building on the MGM lot with John and his secretary-chauffeur, Bud Bellman. Over a glass of beer, John would expand, and the three of them would laugh until their sides ached.

The late Douglas Fairbanks, Senior, and his wife, Lady Ashley, were frequent visitors to Number 4. So, also, were Binnie Barnes and Francis Stevens (who was Lionel's stand-in for over ten years). Tea was always served in the afternoons.

The part of Louis XV suited John down to the ground; he was once again in costume, and loved it. Elaine and he had made up, and altogether he was very happy. He gave Jack Rohan a terrible time trying to keep track of the beautiful lace handkerchiefs that he used in the picture. They were quite expensive, and Barrymore had a habit of losing them. But Rohan has a sneaking suspicion that he used to hand them out to the lovely court ladies as souvenirs. In the cast was Gladys George, and John reminded her of his pronouncement way back in 1919 when he met her in San Francisco, that she would become a great actress.

Speaking of Robert Morley, who played the unhappy Louis XVI, John said, "He will steal the picture from under our noses." This showed again John's quick appreciation of an artist, for at that time Robert Morley was almost unknown in America, and it was his great portrayal of Oscar

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Wilde in the play of that name which ran in New York at the Fulton Theatre so successfully, following closely on the heels of his characterization of King Louis, that made Mr. Morley famous.

There were two directors for *Marie Antoinette*, one, a Frenchman, M. Duvivier, a little man with a chirpy voice, who could hardly speak English, although he understood it well, and Mr. Van Dyke, one of the ablest directors in Hollywood. John caused a great deal of amusement during the filming of this movie. Several times, when he wasn't needed for a particular scene, he would sit in a comfortable folding chair on the sidelines, looking a picture of magnificent sophistication in his silks and laces and ribbons, and his red velvet fur-trimmed robe, which he wore in the Du Barry breakfast scene. But, if the eye should chance to wander below the ankles, it would be greeted by a strange sight—the royal feet would be encased in a pair of aged bedroom slippers. John agrees with the lament of the exiled Napoleon, who, when he discovered that one of his marshals had lost the royal shirts and slippers, said, "They have taken my shirt, but what I regret still more is the loss of my slippers. Someday, my dear marshal, you will appreciate the value of slippers that have taken the shape of your feet." Those are John Barrymore's sentiments, too.

He started a good practice in the studio, which has been kept up ever since. He has a large blackboard with his next

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lines chalked upon it, placed where he can see it, in case of accident. He indignantly denies that he got the idea because he couldn't remember his lines. John simply felt safer in the same way as a trapeze artist does when he performs his double somersaults knowing that there is a net to catch him in case of a slip.

Once during the shooting of an important scene a snore rent the air. It was traced to King Louis XV, who was probably happily dreaming of fishing for salmon in the Scotch highlands, and certainly not caring a hoot that his snore might cost the company four hundred dollars for a retake.

Elaine and John resumed their off-again, on-again bliss during the summer of 1937 and decided to tear up their divorce papers. They gave six forty-five minute readings of Shakespeare over the N.B.C. blue network, with the microphone in Hollywood. Thousands, in fact millions, of listeners were delighted. The broadcast included a narrated dramatic version, also descriptive and explanatory "atmosphere." Streamlined versions of *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Richard III* followed, and John was once more his great self, reveling in the beauty of his first love—Shakespeare. He played both Hamlet and the Ghost in the première, and in *The Tempest* both Caliban and Prospero. Elaine made her Shakespearean debut on the air as Lady Anne in *Richard III*, and played Lady Macbeth to her husband's superb interpretation of the great and power-thirsty Scotch general. As

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John said proudly of Elaine, "Playing Lady Macbeth at twenty-two is a great achievement."

Darriel Donnell of the San Francisco *Examiner* commented briefly on this radio program. "N.B.C. has employed an actor by the name of John Barrymore, former husband of the famous actress, Miss Elaine Barrie."

The next year was taken up with *Romance in the Dark*, in which John again took a supporting part, Gladys Swarthout and John Boles playing the leads. *Spawn of the North* followed, in which he portrayed a country newspaper owner. As part of his business, he pounded the piano and sang, for the first time professionally since *The Stubborn Cinderella*.

*Hold That Co-ed* was his next assignment, the first movie he ever appeared in for Twentieth Century-Fox. Elaine also had a part in it. In the role of Harrigan, John had a riotous time. It was an incredible composite of some of our politicians—those who dream of great libraries and beautiful buildings and stadiums seating a hundred thousand. It was a satirical part, such as John excels in. One moment he was the polished, suave, high-hatted gentleman; the next, a tousle-haired football player. As Harrigan, Barrymore chewed a whole whiskbroom a day. They were sterilized in lots of a dozen, in the studio hospital. He continued to chew straws throughout the whole movie. Total cost of brooms, forty-nine dollars!

The fourth Mrs. Barrymore was happy. While keeping

#### Fourth Marriage—Caliban and Ariel

John in shipshape order for his movie engagements, she had found life in Hollywood up to now pretty boring. John was in the studio all day, and there had been little for her to do. Most of her friends were in New York, so when she was cast even for a small role in *Hold That Co-ed*, she was delighted.

In *The Great Man Votes*, which was based on the experiences of Rabbi Wolf, the lone voter in his precinct, John once again excelled himself. He played the part of a broken-down father left with two small children—acted by little Peter Holden and Virginia Weidler, aged eight. It was the story of a cultured man, who had taken to the bottle since the death of his wife, and was now working as a night watchman. It ended with his being the most important man in the little town where he lived, his reform being mostly due to the wisdom and pride of his children. John recited a poem of John Greenleaf Whittier's with great feeling in this movie. His praise for little Virginia's acting is something for her to remember all her life. Nor has he forgotten how, after his first scene with her, she waved him back, saying, "Don't do that. You're cutting in on my lines."

*Midnight*, with Claudette Colbert, who was still at school when John was doing his greatest roles, was produced by Paramount. Don Ameche, whose acting John Barrymore admires so much, and Mary Astor, his leading lady in the passionate epics of the pretalkie days, Francis Lederer,

## John Barrymore

Hedda Hopper, Rex O'Malley, and Elaine Barrie were also in the cast. John liked his part in this movie, naming it as the most human character he had ever been called upon to play. His baby talk, when he pretends to be a small child answering the phone to Claudette Colbert, had every audience in stitches.

New York . . . Broadway . . . the theaters, memories . . . Sometimes the urge would come upon him to go back to Broadway. He was still comparatively young, and he had been asked by so many to return to the stage, to be its accepted leader and an inspiration to the new generation.

He had thought about it often. The sound of applause is pleasant to the ears, and the studios had of late been featuring, instead of starring, him. Yes, surely the Broadway Lorelei was calling him.

He was mulling over this question very seriously one day, when Elaine walked in. The droop of her shoulders told him there was something wrong. There were unmistakable signs of tears. Immediately John was all concern. "What is the matter, darling?"

She came quickly to the point. Someone had seen the rushes of *Midnight* and had told her that most of her part had been cut out. For a few moments John was furious. Then a smile crossed his face. Here was the answer to his problem. "I shall return to Broadway. There will be loads of people who will come to see me, and say, 'Is that old

#### Fourth Marriage—Caliban and Ariel

so-and-so still alive?' It will all be pretty exciting, darling. I shall let the critics say just what they like, and I shall do the same, just whenever I feel like it. I cannot play Hamlet all my life, and so my comeback shall be a comedy. Comedy is what the public wants. We'll find a good one, and you, darling, shall be my leading lady."

Thus, a very important issue was settled.



## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### *"MY DEAR CHILDREN"*

A PLAY WAS NEEDED! A PLAY WAS NEEDED! THE NEWS WAS relayed from coast to coast. John Barrymore was coming back to town. Within a week his house was groaning with manuscripts. Authors' agents were as excited as cops making their first arrests. A comedy must be found, and John was even willing to do a farce, if the right vehicle could be discovered. It must be a play in which he could do what he liked, and make the people laugh. "Characterization is the great thing, and that can be made as fine and as highly expressive with a comedy part as with a serious one. One doesn't want to go on being one's self, over and over again. It's like being a mince pie in a restaurant window."

The great Hamlet of fifteen years ago wanting to make the new generation laugh—here was news indeed! The Barrymores began their search. Elaine read and read and read scripts until she was dizzy.

## "My Dear Children"

Three years previous to this Miss Laura Wilck, the Hollywood play agent, had sent to Richard Aldrich a comedy to read with a view to possible production. His criticism of it was that it was one of the worst scripts he had ever read, but that if John Barrymore could be induced to play lead in it, at any time, he might then consider it.

The scripts still arrived, thick and fast, but as yet nothing suitable had been found.

Evidently Miss Wilck suddenly remembered Mr. Aldrich's comment of three years back, and on the off chance sent the play to John. It was, of course, *My Dear Children*. Anyway, it arrived in due course at the Barrymore residence. Elaine read it, and was delighted. She passed it on to her illustrious husband for his perusal. He also approved.

*My Dear Children* is the story of an aging actor, Allan Manville, who, while staying as a guest in the Swiss castle of a friend, is suddenly confronted with three grown-up daughters whom he has not seen since they were babies; in fact, of whose existence he is not at all sure that he was aware. John saw himself as the old ham and Elaine as one of his daughters.

No one was more delighted and more astonished than the two authors, Catherine Turney and Jerry Horwin. They could scarcely believe that their play had been selected, but an invitation to visit the Barrymores in their beautiful Bel-Air home convinced them. They went, and before they left

## John Barrymore

that night Elaine had signed a contract buying the rights of their play. Everyone concerned was happy.

But it was not until eight months later that the Barrymores left Hollywood for New York. In the meantime, John had sent the play to Arthur Hopkins, but he had turned it down. Maybe he had not forgotten that John had not consulted him in any way about his London production of *Hamlet* of fifteen years ago.

Brock Pemberton was anxious to produce the play and bring John back to an eager public. But there was so much delay, so many discussions regarding the dialogue, and endless disagreements about casting, which seemed to lead nowhere, that John made it pretty clear that he had not come back from Hollywood just to sit down and wait.

Richard Aldrich, of the well-known producing firm of Aldrich & Myers, was approached just as he was about to leave for a party which he had arranged for the opening of *Here Come the Clowns*, but was told that he could reach Mr. Barrymore after the show, as John himself was having a birthday party and was going to see *The Little Foxes*. He would be very glad if Mr. Aldrich would join them afterward.

When he arrived at midnight at John's apartment, it was to find a formal dinner party in progress. Mr. Aldrich had never met Elaine or John, or anyone else at the table. Feeling a little embarrassed at not knowing what his hostess looked

## "My Dear Children"

like, he almost greeted the wrong person. But in a few moments he was smiling in acknowledgment of introductions.

He met, besides his host and hostess, Dr. Otto L. Preminger, who was afterward to be the director of *My Dear Children*; Catherine Turney and Jerry Horwin, the two authors; Dr. Pauker, their New York play broker; and Mr. and Mrs. William Morris, the Barrymores' agent and his wife. Mr. Aldrich says the thing that remains most vividly in his mind that evening was the fact that he was dying for a drink, and was only given Coca-Cola, for Elaine does not allow any drinks to be served while she rules the ménage.

The next morning Aldrich consulted with his partner, Richard Myers, and by the afternoon negotiations were brought to a close. They were to be the producers of *My Dear Children*, and everyone felt that the American theater was going to be richer for the presence again of its most traditional actor on the boards of Broadway.

Casting for the play proceeded without any mishaps, and within a short time they went into rehearsal. The rehearsals were remarkable for two things: first, the perfect harmony in which everyone worked, there being no "star stuff" with John or Elaine, and second, the discovery as they proceeded, that the play—which had been originally written with quite an amount of pathos, especially where the actor's daughters turn against him—was found to be turning into a screamingly funny farce. Nobody knows his comedy values better

## John Barrymore

than John Barrymore. This change was caused by his many witticisms which were kept in the script, and by his automatically changing anything he felt he could improve upon.

That the prince of the Royal Family should be treading the boards of a New York theater after fifteen years' absence was indeed news. There was an air of excitement around the Morosco Theatre, and the stage doorman had never before had such a hectic time in a "dark" house. It seemed that half New York had just remembered something that it had been wanting to say for years to or about Mr. Barrymore.

One newspaperman, who had managed to pass himself off as someone else in order to get into the darkened auditorium during a rehearsal, happened to come in just as John was shouting at Elaine, "What the hell are you looking at, you pig-headed little fool?"

The next day, the newspaper carried the story that the Barrymores were fighting again. In his rush to be first in with the news, he did not wait to find out that these lines were part of the dialogue.

After the usual photographs, fittings with dressmakers, costumers, hatmakers, the tension and strain of dress rehearsals and last-minute labor pains were over, a train moved out of Grand Central Station on a bitter snowy night bearing a coachload of uneasy actors to the Princeton opening. Uneasy, because everyone felt that the play was not quite good enough for the return of the great Barrymore and because

## "My Dear Children"

any little weakness in the dialogue, any movement that did not seem quite right in the direction, now took on a disproportionate significance—merely one of those forms of panic which precedes any important first night. Reporters came thick and fast as the train unloaded, and the Princeton students felt a certain pride in being the first to welcome back the great actor in person, whom they had only seen in the movies and of whose Hamlet they had heard their parents speak with enchantment.

The costumes were two sizes too large, and the Swiss hunting-lodge scene seemed a bit too florid, but in spite of these obstacles, the curtain rose at the McCarter Theatre on the Princeton Campus Friday, March 24, 1939.

The audience was made up mostly of professors and their wives and eager students. John renewed his acquaintance with Professor Einstein, who was one of the distinguished spectators. No one laughed more heartily than he when John called out to the stage manager, who prompted him from the wings, "Just a little louder, darling, I couldn't hear you."

Only once more was the company to hear such a sincere and overwhelmingly thunderous reception as was accorded Barrymore on that opening night at Princeton, and that was on his first entrance at the Belasco Theatre when he made his return to Broadway ten months later. The homage of that great audience voiced itself for a full five minutes.

But a lot of water was to flow under bridges between the

## John Barrymore

two occasions. The saga of Caliban and Ariel was to have another installment added during the exciting weeks that followed Princeton. Less than one week went by when the first catastrophe in a long and tremendously publicized tour took place. In Washington, where all society had turned out in best bib and tucker to greet his opening, John developed laryngitis and lost his voice completely. The manager of the company, Captain Power-Waters, had to see eight thousand dollars refunded from the box-office and the company returned to New York.

Attended by a nurse, John reported back to duty and reopened at Rochester ten days later. All went well until Elaine slouched out of the show at St. Louis on April 29 and went to Hollywood. Trouble had been brewing between Caliban and Ariel for sometime, starting at Dayton, Ohio, and getting more intense as the weeks went by. Captain Power-Waters acted as mediator and did his utmost to keep the story of the rift from the newspapers. Strategy had to be used.

The Barrymores traveled in separate coaches, Elaine with her maid, and John with his valet. About five minutes before the train was due in at their destination, knowing that an avalanche of reporters and cameramen would be waiting like a pack of hungry wolves, the manager would get the two of them together, as if they really were the happy pair everyone expected them to be. They were then posed arm in

## "My Dear Children"

arm, or having a cup of tea together, just as if nothing were amiss. The cameras clicked, but the moment the photographers were out of sight the Barrymores would jump into separate cabs and depart for the same hotel, where once again they would pose together before taking to their separate suites. On one occasion, as John jumped into a cab, he sat down beside a woman reporter. She had had the cheek to get in at the same time. He was, of course, furious and ordered her to get out, which she did, but what she put in the morning papers is nobody's business! Such a state of affairs could not go on for long. Elaine sent for her mother—and the crisis was at hand. At St. Louis Elaine left, having given Doris Dudley time to fly from Hollywood, study her part, and open on the following Monday at Omaha, Nebraska.

This town was to be the scene of another episode, which made history of the visit of *My Dear Children*. John was naturally very much upset at all the turmoil, both public and private, of his wife's leaving him. As many another man in similar circumstances has done, he consoled himself as well as possible with the cup that cheers.

The house was so crowded on Monday night that it seemed as if people were hanging from the ceiling. Not only had he insulted the town as a whole over the radio during the day, but also his language all through the show was so obscene as to be unprintable. The ladies of the Omaha



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Drama League who sponsored his appearance were horrified and left their seats in disgust. Once again it was the manager's job to set things right, to apologize for Jack's behavior. And this in the hometown of Dorothy McGuire, who played the part of his daughter Portia.

Soon after this episode, John brought a separation suit against Elaine and her mother, to make them account for a quarter of a million dollars in cash, and to demand the return of the Bel-Air house, which was in her name. He gave his lawyers carte blanche to start a separation, divorce, or annulment suit against Elaine. He told them to check on the allowance due Michael Strange, who was now Mrs. Harrison Tweed, also the payments due Dolores Costello, and to straighten out his marital and financial affairs generally. To any other person this life of entanglements would mean turmoil and almost unbearable worry, but not so with Jack. When wasn't he in some sort of chaos?

On May 11 Elaine Barrie filed suit for divorce, and her husband said that while he had never contested his previous wives' divorce proceedings, "This was different."

From the time Elaine left the play she received five hundred dollars a week under the terms of her Equity run-of-the-play contract, which did not expire until December 31, 1939, and twenty-five per cent of the net profits.

After Omaha, business dropped considerably, on account of John's antics, stories of which filled the newspapers.

## "My Dear Children"

Theater managers wanted to cancel bookings. By the time *My Dear Children* reached Des Moines, Iowa, there were faint rumors of closing the show. John had, in the meantime, received a big offer from RKO to return to the movies. Both Mr. Aldrich and Mr. Myers saw a way of straightening things out, financially, for themselves and for Mr. Barrymore. The producers were also offered a large sum by the picture firm to release their star. But John, who has never worried about finances for himself, decided, then and there, that the opening in Chicago would seal the fate of the play. He said very emphatically, "We're going to open in Chicago. The deal with the pictures is off." Upon these words hung the future of a show which made theatrical history.

Before it reached the Windy City, the show was booked into Davenport. By Saturday, there were not sufficient funds to pay salaries and bills. The producers were beginning to lose faith in John and in the play. They would put no further money into the production. However, an "angel" was found in the company, someone who had more faith in the star than in the show. Instead of closing, the production went to Chicago, where Aldrich and Myers overnight found themselves with a smash hit on their hands.

No story of the play's famous sojourn at the Selwyn Theatre would be complete without mention of John's ad libs. They so delighted the audiences that many people came back, again and again, to hear fresh gags and to roar at

## John Barrymore

Barrymore's clownish antics. They were never disappointed, for he rarely gave the same show twice—to the discomfort of the actors who had to play with him.

Years before in *Hamlet*, John used to dread the day when either he or his cast would go stale. He saw to it that there was no chance of such a thing happening in this show. No audience ever had a better time at a play or ever had seen a show quite like it. It is doubtful if there ever *was* one like it. One thing was certain, that John was having the time of his life. The fabulous great lover of stage and screen, the Hamlet, the Richard, the sometime Romeo, and erstwhile Caliban, was having a kid's party on the stage.

Such an avalanche of friends called upon him at his hotel, or at the stage door, that he never had a minute's peace. Good-hearted Jack wanted to entertain them all after the show, which meant that he got no sleep whatever, but use what strategy he might, Captain Power-Waters could not get John to take any rest. He would slip out to his car with his chauffeur and remain until dawn in one of the town's night clubs, not the swank ones. Nothing irks Barrymore more than conventionality. The noisier and more Bohemian the spot, the better he liked it. Harry's New Yorker was one of his favorites, and he certainly put that place on the map, if it was not already there. People went specially to see him. John felt so much at home there that he would often take the "mike" from whomever was entertaining and keep the

## "My Dear Children"

entire audience in stitches with his gags. Everyone loved him, most of all the entertainers, for he always gave them a plug and a slap on the back.

One night in the middle of the play a punchbowl full of cocktails was upset on the center of the stage by accident. John made his entrance and, of course, spotted the pool. One of his daughters comes in and asks him his opinion of the man she has fallen in love with. John is supposed to reply "I think he's a dirty dog," but on this occasion he pointed to the spot on the floor and said, "Not only is he a dirty dog, but he isn't even housebroken."

On another occasion, when the auditorium was packed as usual, ten minutes before show time there was no sign of Barrymore. Everyone was frantic. As the curtain was due to rise, he arrived quite cheerfully and was met by his manager—a few pounds lighter from anxiety—who demanded an explanation. It appears John had rebelled against being in a hotel so long that he had taken the keys of his car from his chauffeur, and had been visiting various night spots until late in the afternoon, when, falling asleep in his car from sheer exhaustion, he woke up only just in time to get to the theater. But this was not all. During the second act, John had to change into a Shakespearean costume, having, of course, a certain time allotted to him for this purpose. This night he was very late getting into his clothes. The stage manager, Fred Sears, expecting him to be ready, rang

## John Barrymore

up the curtain. Barrymore, to avoid a stage wait, made his entrance only half clothed, and with apologies finished dressing on stage, explaining to the audience what each garment was for, and swearing as the zippers got tangled up, to the intense enjoyment of all present.

At every performance there were the usual latecomers, and John would welcome them with, "Where in hell have you been?" or, "You're late, darling." On other occasions, when he was making ardent love to his beautiful countess, some man in the audience would laugh loudly, John would stop, look in his direction, and say to him, "Ah! I see you've done this yourself," and the house would shriek with laughter.

Another incident which happened is rather amusing. John is supposed to say to Philip Reed, "Are you staying down at the inn, Mr. Nelson?" Cordelia, John's daughter, tells her father that Mr. Nelson is on his way to Berne to a house party. One night Doris Dudley substituted the word housewarming for house party. John lifted the famous eyebrow, and said, "Housewarming? That sounds intriguing. What part of the house are they going to warm? In any case, why go all the way to Berne to a housewarming? Stay here and we'll burn the damn house down."

Sometimes the cast found it a little trying that John should keep them so long standing onstage, while he ad libbed. One night, Philip Reed went into John's dressing

## "My Dear Children"

room and made a complaint about it. The star said nothing, but the next time Reed had a scene with him, he said, "You had better sit down," and proceeded to ad lib for twice as long as he had ever done before.

Asked about his ad libbing by Jack Gould of the *New York Times*, he told him that he learned it from William Collier when he first trained under him: Collier, too, was never at a loss for words. "I don't mind being held down by a script written by a gentleman named Mr. William Shakespeare," John said, "but, I see no damn reason to be held down by any other script, particularly a farce comedy. I have great respect for the authors of *My Dear Children*; they have written a charming, diverting play. They must have had *some* lasso to get me back."

One evening, a few weeks after the show had started playing to capacity, there was no Mr. Barrymore. He had had a heart attack. A doctor was immediately summoned, who ordered the star to remain in bed for at least a week. To help him regain his strength he was receiving oxygen treatments, spending alternate hours in an oxygen tent, the doctor promising him that he could return to his role only if he behaved himself, which meant absolute rest, no visitors, and no telephone calls. Again, the show was closed.

Elaine phoned messages of sympathy, and even flew to Chicago to see her husband, but all to no avail. He refused to speak to her.

## John Barrymore

Ethel was sent for. As usual, she dropped everything when John needed her. She left New York by plane, and remained by his bedside until he was well enough to return to the stage. When she saw him in the show at the Selwyn, she rocked with laughter at his antics, and told him definitely that it was one of the greatest performances of his career.

At no time in his life was John at a loss for a crack against himself. The moment he felt well enough to see newspaper reporters, he told them that it was the first time in his career he had ever been a star in a tent show.

*CHICAGO*

THERE WAS GREAT SPECULATION ABOUT JOHN'S RETURN TO the Selwyn. When a star is ill, and the show is forced to close, with the intention of reopening, running expenses go on just the same. The cast has to be paid salaries, the advertising must be continued, and publicity must necessarily be doubled. Advance sales diminish to nothing. Would Barrymore's popularity justify all these losses?

The answer was that he went over bigger than ever. The show reopened to an enthusiastic capacity house, and John was overwhelmed by its applause. During his brief illness he had been deluged with letters, telegrams, flowers, bottles of rare brandy, and books. Women, young and old, inquired anxiously about him. One young lady whom he had met at a night club actually climbed a fire escape of his hotel in order to get a peep at him. This amused John enormously, and reminded him of the time when he scared Ashton Stevens almost to death by crawling along a tenth-floor cornice of



## John Barrymore

the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco, in order to say hello to a girl he knew, who had locked her door but not her window.

Eventually, Captain Power-Waters decided it was best to move John right out of town, where he could at least get some rest during the day. A charming country house was found at Glencoe, about forty miles out of Chicago, where the star could be kept away from the crowds that gathered every time he put his profile outside the door.

The Windy City being the hopping-off or stopping-off place between Hollywood and New York, John had a wonderful time entertaining and being entertained by his Hollywood friends. Charles Laughton and his wife, Elsa Lanchester, came to see the show one night. John announced the fact of their presence to the audience, and asked Mr. Laughton to shake hands with him across the footlights, which he did, to the delight of the customers. Another night Fredric March and his wife, Florence Eldridge, saw the show. One matinee Douglas Fairbanks, Junior, and his wife visited him. Mary Pickford was another celebrity to stop at the Selwyn. She went backstage to see John, and became so angry with him for prostituting his art—as she termed his clowning performance—that she became quite hysterical and had to be given a sedative. He spent one wonderful day with his old friend, Ashton Stevens, whom he had first met in San Francisco around 1907, and whose name he never missed

## Chicago

an opportunity to bring into the dialogue of the play.

One night after the show John received an unexpected demonstration of homage at one of the less-sophisticated night clubs that he liked to patronize. Maurice Evans's Shakespearean company was playing an engagement at the Opera House in Chicago. Knowing that Whitford Kane, who was playing First Grave Digger for a change, was an old friend of Barrymore's, the young boys and girls of the *Hamlet* company begged him to take them where John was likely to be, so that they might take a look at him. Whitford, knowing just the kind of night spot our hero would fancy, upon making inquiries found that he was expected that same evening. Mr. Kane took his troupe of young actors and actresses to the place. They engaged a table and waited expectantly. It was not long before the subject of their adulation arrived. His hair was unkempt, there were still traces of greasepaint on his face, he wore no tie, but he was happy.

"Here he comes," whispered Whitford. "But he won't know me for a moment. He hasn't seen me for fifteen years." It was quite true. For a full thirty seconds the two men looked at each other. Then John's face broke up into a thousand mischievous wrinkles.

"Why, Whitford, you old son-of-a-something, it's good to see you. How have you been?"

As Mr. Kane brought the actor over to their table, all

## John Barrymore

those proud youngsters rose in tribute. Whether the young people or John enjoyed themselves better, it would be hard to say. Anyway, it was long past breakfast time when the reminiscences came to an end.

A week or so after *My Dear Children* reopened, four patrons in evening dress came in quite late. John stopped in the middle of his speech and roared his frequent greeting at them, "Where the hell have you been?" And with the audience in fits of laughter, he frolicked to the end of the show. Yet in the middle of the play, John, sitting under a beautiful portrait of himself as Hamlet, has a few moments when the greatness that is Barrymore is both seen and heard. He gazes long at the portrait and then, looking out into space, gives the immortal "To be or not to be," and the house that was rocking with laughter but a minute before becomes silent and still: homage from the memories of those who had seen Shakespeare's own Prince of Denmark fifteen years before.

All through an intensely hot summer the show played to capacity business. After twenty-four weeks there had only been two changes in the cast, Kenneth Treseder replacing Lloyd Gough, and Dorothy McGuire being replaced by Patricia Waters, whom John personally brought on at the end of her first performance for a special bow and then introduced her to the audience, which was a charming gesture.

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The part of Allan Manville was very strenuous, Barrymore only being off the stage long enough to change his attire. The intense heat did not help matters, although even that called for a joke. Backstage, the actors used to suck pieces of ice to keep their throats cool. Upon being given a piece, John said, "I haven't experienced such a chill since Elaine left."

He now complained of toothache and weakness. Sometimes he would arrive at the Selwyn so tired-looking that the company wondered if he would be able to pull through the performance. Yet, in spite of his physical malaise and entire lack of appetite or desire for sleep, he went bravely on. Four doctors were called in on the case. They examined him separately. They held conferences, but they could come to no decision. The pain in the upper jaw bothered him so much that Earle H. Thomas, oral specialist, was sent for. He solved the problem. John was suffering from a badly ulcerated tooth. It was found upon examination that the infection had reached the sinus, necessitating the removal of part of the roof of the mouth, as well as two molar teeth. John played the last two performances sitting down; his weakness made it impossible for him to stand. Sometimes the show ran on until after midnight, and still nobody left the theater.

In spite of all this suffering, the fighting spirit of the Barrymores came out on top. Even John's sense of humor

## John Barrymore

stood by him. He said to the audience, who had watched him painfully making for a chair on the stage, "It's amazing how many places you can find to sit down on, on the stage." Then he added, "Give me a wheelchair and I'll do a Lionel." At the end of the last matinee before the doctors ordered him to bed, he stepped forward, took three or four bows, managed to keep on his feet until the curtain came down, and then collapsed in a heap on the stage.

The tragedy of Barrymore is the give-a-dog-a-bad-name attitude that has trailed him through life. Many of the patrons who saw him walk so shakily in those last few performances before his illness got the idea that the star was under the influence of drink. John once said when he heard someone make the same disparaging accusation, "You see, even if I wanted to, I couldn't lead a quiet, normal life, being dependent on public opinion. So, knowing that, I've always made myself out to be the rottenest, most corrupt creature you can imagine, so that the public can spend their good money and point their finger at me and say, 'See, he's drunk again.'"

Those who know the real John Barrymore realize that that attitude of willing his own downfall was some kind of cynical bee that had got in his bonnet, but which, happily, has buzzed out again. Those who associate with him know that he now imbibes very sparingly. Yet the audiences insist upon believing that liquor inspires his ad libs, and the bulk

## Chicago

of the patrons used to ask at the box-office, "Is Mr. Barrymore drunk today?" Upon being told that he was not, they would look disappointed, and say, "Oh, what a pity, we shan't have any ad libs." But they invariably came out of the show, weak from laughter. He had been having fun pretending to the audience that he was "cockeyed." "They have a right to their innocent amusement," he would say.

Once again the Selwyn was closed, this time for two weeks. His physicians have since stated that John was more seriously ill than anyone knew during this period. But the most spectacular member of the Royal Family came out on top, as usual, and when he had regained his strength, was in better health than he had enjoyed in years.

Twice during the run of *My Dear Children* was the theatrical truism, you can't come back again once you have closed, proved to be untrue. The inquiries and messages that had been sent during his first illness were now doubled. Chicagoans had taken the star to their hearts, and the line of people buying seats for his return reached the length of the block. The town went Barrymore mad. There was "Barrymore Day" at the Washington Park race track. The races on the day's card were named for the members of the cast. There was "Barrymore Day" at the baseball game, and "Barrymore Day" at the circus.

Speaking of circuses, there is no form of amusement that John loves better. He says he is determined that some sum-

## John Barrymore

mer he is going to travel with a circus as a clown—in his opinion, one of the most difficult, yet fascinating, jobs in the world.

During the American Legion Convention, which turned Chicago into a hell-let-loose, John and his manager were trying to get across Clark Street one day, and finding it impossible, John was reminded of a similar episode in New York when he was playing at the Empire Theatre in *Clair de Lune*.

"It was on matinee day, and as usual I was running the time pretty close. Clarke, my chauffeur, was driving, but we suddenly came to a halt. We had run into the police parade! This meant a delay of another twenty minutes. It was now two-twenty-eight. Suddenly, I had a bright idea. I got out of the car. I was on the east side of Fifth Avenue. In a loud voice I gave the command, 'Eyes Right!' It was immediately obeyed. I made a dash across the avenue. A mounted officer came up in a fury.

" 'What the hell—' He stopped dead in surprise. 'Oh, it's you, Mr. Barrymore.' He was immediately all smiles. (John could do no wrong in New York at that time; he was the most popular figure in the city.)

" 'I can't be late for the matinee, officer,' I said, putting on my best smile.

" 'That's all right, Mr. Barrymore. Saw your show last night. You were grand.'

## Chicago

"I scribbled a note on a card and gave it to him. 'Tell your boys I'll take care of them at the show as my guests. Just let me know.' The very next performance they turned up in a body. It was well worth it, to get me in time for the matinee. They're a grand lot."

It must not be thought that the star was making a fortune by all this success. Scarcely a night passed that a minion of the law did not thrust a summons or "body attachment" upon him. One time it was for a hotel bill which was found not to have been paid in St. Louis or, rather, to have been paid by a check which was dishonored; the reason being that John and Elaine had a joint account at that time, and when the quarrel took place between them, they each drew checks, Elaine not knowing the account was closed and John having entirely forgotten. Barrymore was not in the least embarrassed by such minor things as a body attachment for nearly a thousand dollars. Though it sounds like an enormous sum for two people for a week, the account was mostly for phone bills. They were not sentimental bills. At this time, John and Elaine were calling up their respective lawyers in Hollywood about their divorce. The police officer had every intention of arresting John, and this a few minutes before the curtain was due to go up on a packed house. Captain Power-Waters managed to get the bill paid to save the star from going to jail.

Then there were summonses from Dolores for mainte-



## John Barrymore

nance for the children. These also came about in an extraordinary way. Since Caliban had married Ariel (or Mrs. Barrymore, 1935 model), she had been managing all his money affairs, including the payment of maintenance to the children of Mrs. Barrymore (1928 model), but when the quarrel at St. Louis took place, Elaine naturally stopped paying her husband's obligations.

Another night there came a summons from his New York lawyer, Maurice Hotchner, for over ten thousand dollars, for services rendered. And so on, until John, after having paid two hundred dollars a week to Dolores, five hundred a week to Elaine, certain monies to Diana, fees to lawyers in New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago, fees to Dr. Thomas, oral specialist in frequent attendance, rent for his furnished house, and living expenses, had scarcely enough to pay his male nurse, Karl Steuver. He even had to borrow a dime at the circus to buy a bag of peanuts.

John was made very happy one day by the news that his daughter Diana was coming to Chicago to play in *Outward Bound* at the Harris Theatre right next door to him. He had not seen her since she was at boarding school, and every man likes to see the woman his baby has grown to be. When he knew the hour of her arrival, he had a bedroom at his house decorated with flowers in her honor, and went to meet her at the station, as excited as a schoolboy.

There was, of course, a great deal of publicity at the



# *A Gallery of Wives*



KATHERINE  
HARN



MICHAEL STRANGE







## Chicago

terminal; photographers, reporters, and others—all of which was very good for Diana. But, after many hugs and kisses between father and daughter, she decided not to stay with him, preferring to occupy a suite at the Ambassador East with her personal maid, which, needless to say, was a great disappointment to daddy.

To enable him to see the new generation of the house of Barrymore, the management of the Selwyn Theatre canceled their Wednesday matinee and changed it to Thursday (the matinee at the Harris Theatre also being on Wednesday). The entire *My Dear Children* company went to see *Outward Bound*. John was delighted with his daughter's work, and, of course, visited her afterward in her dressing room. He took Patricia Waters with him, who was playing his eldest daughter, Portia, in the Selwyn comedy, and was photographed with his real eldest daughter on one side and his stage daughter on the other.

After performances, John took Diana to night clubs. Once he thought she was being a little bit too sophisticated and admonished her, saying, "Oh, stop trying to be a Barrymore and be yourself." It had been a charming reunion, and when Diana left Chicago two weeks later John felt sad. He had seen so little of her, it seemed.

Reluctantly Chicagoans saw *My Dear Children* and its amazing star leave their city for further commitments. Originally scheduled to stay four weeks, the company had

## John Barrymore

stayed thirty-four, shattering all local records and making out-of-towners theater-minded once again, as was evidenced by the fact that dozens of people daily asked at the box-office, when purchasing tickets, if the seats were numbered and if the show was continuous.

Just as reluctantly did the company say farewell to a people who had welcomed them with open arms, who had invited them to be guests of honor at their night-club parties, luncheons, dinners, fashion shows, and dances. At Henrici's restaurant, whose manager got quite into the habit of sending hundredth-performance birthday cakes over to the actors, Barrymore's three stage daughters gave a huge Christmas party to everyone connected with the Selwyn Theatre, backstage and front, from John himself to Whitey the stage doorman, from the two boys in the box-office, Stanley Levine and Manfred Kernwein to the colored porters. Three little colored girls, who had waited patiently outside the stage door, night after night all through the long run, for the pleasure of saying hello to the cast as they came out, and who had saved up their pennies to buy each member of the company a Christmas present, were not forgotten. They probably will never forget that party. John made one of his most eloquent speeches, and there wasn't a dry eye when he had finished.

Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Detroit had waited a mighty long time for the advent of *My Dear Children*, and they

## Chicago

were not going to be put off any longer. They had been told that Mr. Barrymore's health was failing, but when he did finally arrive at Pittsburgh they pronounced him the most fabulous invalid in theatrical history.

Business in Pittsburgh also broke all records. Every performance was sold out, in both Cleveland and Detroit as well. It was just fifteen years since Barrymore had appeared in the last-named city. The play was *Hamlet*. As he strode into the busy city again, he cocked the famous eyebrow at the skyline, and unmindful of the citizens' civic pride, remarked, "It's just the same damn place it was fifteen years ago." But they loved him just the same, and stood for hours in below-zero weather to see him come out of the stage door.



## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### *RETURN TO BROADWAY*

IN ANSWER TO A JOURNALIST'S QUERY IN CHICAGO AS TO whether he was on the lookout for wife number five, John had replied that he was. He stipulated that she must be old-fashioned, must love cooking, and be anxious to sew for him. He said, of course he had not met her yet, but he was sure that she'll be shy and fond of flowers. To complete the prospectus, he had a news photograph taken, showing him getting into practice for domestic life by washing dishes in his kitchen. It would have been more appropriate had he been pictured making an omelet. He is an adept at it. He loves nothing better than to toss together a number of ingredients, pepper them well, add any other seasoning he can find, pop the whole concoction into a pan, and in a few minutes turn out the most toothsome surprise you could imagine. It is usually about two o'clock in the morning that he decides to show off his culinary art.

From the moment this dish-washing picture appeared in

## Return to Broadway

the newspapers, his mail bag was inundated with proposals and love letters. They came from wealthy matrons, from little waitresses, and from married women who were willing to leave their husbands and children for the sheer joy of being with the Great Lover.

The following excerpts, taken at random from some of the epistles received, before his opening in New York, will give an idea of the type of letters that people will write to a star.

*Glendale, Long Island, N. Y.*

*Dear Mr. Barrymore:*

*. . . I am tired of night life, and I have two children, but I saw in the paper that you wanted a wife. If you really care, call me up, please. . . ."*

*Philadelphia, Pa.*

*Dear Mr. Barrymore:*

*Last week I was given a pair of knitting needles, a book of instructions on how to knit, and a packet of self-blooming flowers. Do you wonder that I am frightened at such an outlook when I am young and pretty? Can you give me a few pointers?*

*Sulphur Springs, Texas*

*Dear Mr. Barrymore:*

*I am a high-class widow, and you are my favorite actor. I am as lonely as you are. I am very fond of home life.*

## John Barrymore

Newark, N. J.

Dear Mr. Barrymore:

*I am so happy to see that you are going to settle down at last. I have the greenest eyes and auburn hair. Once we were together, I would make you so happy and you would not look for another wife all the rest of your days.*

Los Angeles, Calif.

Dear Mr. Barrymore:

*I am a good cook, love flowers, birds, and babies. I would like a fine man like you for a husband. . . ."*

Santa Barbara, Calif.

Dear Mr. Barrymore:

*In your desperate search for the old-fashioned girl you would like to marry, your picture tells me that you have a crushed heart within. You are hiding from the world, but not from me. You have always acted the gentleman, and in doing so, you have preserved deep in the hearts of your American audience, a place no woman could ever give cause to stain. In me you would find a person to really miss you when you leave on that one journey that there's no return. . . ."*

Here is an excerpt from a letter of a different caliber:

Detroit, Mich.

*. . . Thank you for having brought so much beauty into my life, by your incomparable characterizations. . . .*

## Return to Broadway

After Elaine made the public statement that she was leaving him on account of his spanking her so hard, John received this letter:

*Grosse Pointe, Mich.*

*My dear Mr. Barrymore:*

*Saw your show and enjoyed it. May I make a suggestion? If you would not spank your wife so high up, it would not be so painful to the victim. Cup your hand and spank low on the buttocks with an upward swing, it will look just as effective.*

A MOTHER OF EXPERIENCE.

Veteran New Yorkers cannot remember another such burst of ballyhooing as John received on his arrival in the city after an absence of fifteen years. Reporters did not wait for him to reach town; they boarded his train and entered his special railroad car at Albany. He was in great form, full of delight at being back again on Broadway.

Everyone laughed at the epithets which he threw round with gusto and abandon. By the time he had reached Grand Central Station, the platform was thick with eager reporters and excited photographers. He gave interviews, and posed in all sorts of comical positions for the cameramen. He gave them all to understand very definitely that he had finished with Elaine, and proceeded to kiss all the girls who came to greet him, to their extreme delight. He insisted upon

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being pictured with the colored Pullman porter and the special officer who escorted him up the platform and into his car, which was surrounded by a mob of people.

His manager, always anxious for John to get all the rest possible, had taken a house in Bayside for him. No one else knew the address, not even John. This was done to make sure the star would not be pestered by prying eyes, autograph hunters, and celebrity seekers. He was whipped away from Grand Central happily unaware of his destination.

Arriving at Bayside, the pretty little town on Long Island where Dolores had spent her childhood, he stopped and had supper at the Power-Waters home. Immediately afterward he went to his hideout and took up residence there. He settled down expecting to enjoy the solitude of the country for quite a long time, and even anticipated the pleasure of owning another yacht, if New York liked him as well as Chicago. He was, of course, blissfully unaware that he would be uprooted from this house in less than a week.

His actual address had been kept a dark secret. But somehow it got in the papers that Barrymore had visited his manager's home, and that was enough. For three whole days and nights the Power-Waters home became a den of reporters—men and women, who were certain that the star was hiding there. Nothing would convince these intrepid pioneers that John was not concealed in the house. They hunted everywhere, even looking under the beds.

## Return to Broadway

When they were satisfied that he was not sealed up in the oven, they demanded to be given the address of the hideout, but did not succeed in getting it, because had it been given to one it would have to be given to all, and it was absolutely necessary that John have rest. However, they bided their time, and were rewarded for their efforts. The method was ingenious. It was certain that sister Ethel would visit her favorite brother before long. They were on very good terms since Elaine had left the dovecote. The newspapermen lay in hiding, waiting for Ethel's car to leave the house in Mamaroneck, and followed it each time she went out. Soon she headed for Bayside, and the cat was out of the bag.

Meanwhile, at the Belasco Theatre on Forty-fourth Street, where the play was due to open on Wednesday, January 31, the two people in the box-office were well-nigh exhausted from selling so many tickets. The crowd of purchasers reached around the block. It was the biggest advance sale in many a long day, reaching over fifty thousand dollars.

Tickets became so scarce, as to be almost unobtainable. Many people offered as much as a hundred dollars for opening-night seats, and could not get them.

Excitement reigned as Wednesday drew on. No greater array of famous people had ever been seen together than was gathered at the Belasco, to welcome back their favorite star on his opening night.

## John Barrymore

At last the curtain rose. John Barrymore was back on Broadway!

It was a breathtaking welcome. The ovation lasted five minutes. Outside, the police on horseback had had trouble with the yelling crowds. Inside, the enthusiasm of the notables and the general public could not be subdued. Some of the audience were disappointed that John did not ad lib as much as was expected of him, but any actor of his reputation who could stand in the middle of the stage dressed in an Alpine costume, with a large bunch of red roses clutched in one hand, and sing Mr. Lear's immortal *The Owl and the Pussy Cat* with all its innumerable verses, while a sophisticated audience sits spellbound, as if it were listening to opera—well, ad libbing isn't needed.

Almost all the critics enjoyed themselves, even though some of them felt that it was a pity for an artist with such wonderful gifts, "the most accomplished actor in the American Theater" to make a foolish show of himself in such a light play. To quote Mr. Atkinson of the *New York Times*: "Although John Barrymore is merely clowning in *My Dear Children*, there is no doubt about his ability. He is still the most gifted actor in the country. . . . If Mr. Barrymore were a ham, this trashy story, and his appearance in it, might be a pathetic ordeal for his old admirers. But he is a wit. He plays it with an alert sense of mischief. It is gruff Jack, gay Jack, sly Jack, mad Jack in a lazy flow of gleaming inconse-

## Return to Broadway

quentialities . . . Although he has recklessly played the fool for a number of years, he is nobody's fool in *My Dear Children*, but a superbly gifted actor on a tired holiday."

The cast of *My Dear Children* on the opening night at the Belasco Theatre was as follows:

Kleinbach . . . . .	Arnold Korff
Reed Hanson . . . . .	Otto Hulett
Portia Trent . . . . .	Patricia Waters
Titcomb . . . . .	George Reynolds
Felice, Countess de Britonne . . . . .	Tala Birell
Allan Manville . . . . .	John Barrymore
Albert . . . . .	Roland Hogue
Miranda Burton . . . . .	Lois Hall
Cordelia Clark . . . . .	Doris Dudley
Lee Stevenson . . . . .	Kenneth Tresceder
Willard Nelson . . . . .	Philip Reed
Jacques Korbi . . . . .	Stiano Braggiotti
Ernst Van Betke . . . . .	Leo Chalzel

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Stage Manager . . . . . Fred Sears

John's success was phenomenal. The box-office staff needed to be increased, so large were the mail orders, so pressing the advance sale.

Only once on the opening night did John cause a rumpus. When he looks at the portrait of himself as Hamlet on the stage, he is supposed to say what he thinks of himself, as



## John Barrymore

the curtain comes down—remarks which he always interspersed with almost unprintable language. Fearing to offend the New York audience, the stage manager, Fred Sears, received orders to drop the curtain as quickly as possible, so that these *bon mots* could not be heard. John was so angry when his favorite cuss words were cut out that he refused to change into his costume for the next scene until an explanation had been made.

He was told that the flyman had let the curtain down too soon, and that it was all a mistake. John was quite satisfied, and allowed his valet to dress him.

This was indeed a fantastic evening in the theater. At 11:50, as a madly enthusiastic audience awaited a curtain speech, a strange man leaped from his seat in the front row of the orchestra and landed on the stage. His face was painted a ghastly white, and he wore a sort of nondescript costume of navy blue with tights and orange shoes and stockings. He made a movement with his arms and shouted, "Stop! Stop! This is Hamlet's ghost talking. I have always wanted to stand on the same stage with the greatest Hamlet. Now at last I have achieved my ambition." The man was in a cold sweat, and was obviously laboring under a great nervous strain. Many of John's loyal admirers held their breath in horror, for no one had any idea what was this extraordinary-looking apparition's intention. He proceeded

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to rattle off the famous soliloquy, but John with his ever-ready wit and nonchalance stopped him by putting his arms kindly around the fellow's shoulders, and saying, "You look as if you have had a tough winter." The curtain was rung down while a couple of stagehands removed the offender, who turned out to be an out-of-work actor seeking publicity.

No sooner had the curtain fallen on an exciting night than Barrymore, who was nearly exhausted, found himself leading man in an offstage play far more complicated than any in which he had performed in public. This time it was a tussle between the roles of father and husband, caused by daughter Diana and wife Elaine, the latter dressed in a low-cut, gold lamé evening gown, and a beautiful cape of red fox furs. Elaine followed John to his dressing room, but was not allowed to enter.

However, when the actor's party reached Fefe's Monte Carlo, Elaine was already there. Diana, looking very stunning in black velvet, with a diamond necklace gleaming against her white shoulders, was making a forceful attempt to keep her stepmother and her father from the reconciliation that Elaine was so determined to bring about.

Ariel flung all discretion to the winds; she knew what she wanted and was not afraid to say so. "All I want is twenty-four hours with you, John," she pleaded. "I cannot go on without you."

## John Barrymore

'The ever soft-hearted John wilted. "You are like a breath of spring," he observed, and gave her a kiss. "This is like the gentle rain from heaven."

Diana's anger rose, as John melted. She requested Elaine to leave. "This is my father," she challenged. "We are Barrymores, and you have nothing in common with us."

Elaine refused to go, and there was nothing for Diana to do but to storm out. It all ended at 4 A.M., with Elaine as victor. The John Barrymores were once again united, and another of the Caliban-Ariel episodes was over, to the chagrin of the rest of the Royal Family of Broadway.

They spent the night at the Navarro, where Elaine was staying, and the next day went out to the retreat in Bayside, but remained only long enough to bring John back—bag, baggage, and nurse—to the Central Park South hotel until Elaine found a suitable penthouse where they could set up housekeeping again.

There was, of course, a verbal set-to between Doris Dudley, who had replaced Elaine at Omaha and who had been in the play ever since, and Elaine herself, when the latter wanted to get back her role in *My Dear Children*. Once again Mrs. Barrymore was victorious, and Miss Dudley left the cast. Elaine told Ida Zeitlin of *Photoplay* in an interview lately that her "opening night was a nightmare, but that now the play was an established routine, she loved it." When asked about her life with John, she replied, "No two

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people, unless they are endowed with angelic dispositions, can adjust themselves to marriage within six months or a year. We weren't left to ourselves to make that necessary adjustment. Our differences became a matter of public interest. We're wiser now. We know what the papers can do, and we're not going to let them do it again. We know we are miserable apart. We're not so foolish as to believe that we'll never again argue about anything. Differences simulate. But I've reached the conclusion that my life with John is more important to me than anything else, and I'm ready to do my best to keep it. He's twenty men in one; where could I find another like him?"

Many things had hurt John's feelings during his lifetime, but few so deeply as a paragraph that appeared in the newspapers at this time, announcing that Dolores, who was married again, was not going to allow her children to use the name of Barrymore, because it held them up to ridicule at school.

John's health and state of mind were beginning to cause him trouble. There had been continuous excitement, and he had lost sleep consistently since the famous opening. As usual, he worked valiantly on, until it became evident that the strenuous part of Allan Manville was too much for him.

The show closed for the fourth time since its inception.

As John left the theater prior to his going to the hospital, the stage doorman called out to him, "I hope you'll soon be

## John Barrymore

feeling better, sir." To which he replied, "Don't worry; you can never kill a ham. You can cure one, but you can never kill one."

Barrymore became a patient at the Mount Sinai Hospital, and, as of old, the reporters were after him. They had a hard time trying to get even a look at him. One was found scaling the walls of the building, and was just getting his camera in position when he was nabbed by a nurse from within. John was much disgruntled at having to go to the hospital. He has a horror of them anyway, and especially now, since there was fifteen thousand dollars in advance sales at the theater for that week! He protested loudly that he did not have cirrhosis of the liver or T.B., and that he wasn't going to have a baby. His clothes had been hidden, so—what the hell!

John was scheduled for a broadcast on the Jessel program a few days after his illness. Ethel was asked to substitute for him, and refused. She was too angry at him for having taken Elaine back.

Great consternation to everyone concerned was caused by a statement in the *Journal-American* that Mr. Barrymore was so ill that he would never leave the hospital alive. This rumor was contradicted hotly and promptly, although it had done immeasurable harm to the advance sales at the box-office.

During his stay in bed, John received an amusing letter

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from a foreigner, who wished to nurse him back to health. The following is a quotation from it:

*Akron, Ohio*

*Dear Sir:*

*The second announcement of your illness in two weeks' time induced me to offer my services. . . . I have been working in a rubber factory. I wrote a similar letter to —, he rejected my offer, saying I don't need anyone to look after me. Two years later he died. I request that you engage me to worry about your health.*

It was estimated by John's publicity man that his return to New York, and the reconciliation with Elaine, held space record in the newspapers, even putting the war news off the front pages. This caused the New York *Post* humorously to place in a prominent position in one of its editions: "Positively nothing about the Barrymores in this paper."

Within a week John was back on the job, feeling better than he had felt for a long time. Elaine came back in her original part. Doris Dudley had been given another one, in a different play, and everyone was happy. One of the members of the cast had a small portable radio in her dressing room, and was playing it during the show. It reminded John of a story connected with the death of his Uncle John Drew, who had passed away in San Francisco.

## John Barrymore

"The newspapers carried the story that Uncle John's remains were being cremated and were going to be taken to Philadelphia, the old home town, but it was not true. However, a few days later a friend and I left San Francisco and took a small black portable victrola with us. We arrived at Philadelphia and were met at the station by a man in deep mourning, and with a very long face, who said, 'May I have the great honor of carrying Mr. Drew's ashes?'

"For a moment we were puzzled. Then we nearly died with laughter as the truth dawned upon us. He had mistaken the victrola for the case containing Uncle John's ashes."

With his renewed health, John continued to meet his part head on. He still did funny things with his eyebrows, his hands, and his feet. He continued to wear comical hats, shout at the top of his voice, and spank his daughter with gusto. He reprimanded a patron one night, who took exception to Elaine, by asking him to come onstage and have it out. He gave advice backstage to young college students who wanted to become actors. Apropos of this, it may be of use to potential followers of the art to learn what he had to say on the subject.

"Finished actors don't spring full grown from the brow of Zeus. They are the product of long experience and careful training. While there is no foolproof formula that assures dramatic success, there are certain steps that a young actor

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may follow. Let him go to a college or dramatic school, where he can learn how to use his voice and body—and is given a chance to try them out in amateur productions.

"Let him try to get into a summer theater apprentice group and play small parts with professional actors. Work backstage as well. Then start out playing bit parts in road companies, and the day comes when he finds himself on Broadway.

"It's a tough fight, and many fall by the wayside, but it is the only way to reach the top. And nobody had a harder struggle than John Barrymore."

All good things have to come to an end sometime, and *My Dear Children* closed after four months' run on Broadway, to allow John to go back to Hollywood. Business had been wonderful ever since the opening in Chicago. The show during its entire run had grossed \$666,519.06—not so bad for a "one-man three-ringed circus." The packed houses everywhere reminded John of the cry of the London bus conductors on a wet day, who call out "full inside" when there isn't another seat to be had.

Barrymore signed to do *The Great Profile* before he ever read the script. He just liked the title. It was such a burlesque that Twentieth Century-Fox was afraid to ask him to do it, and had signed Adolphe Menjou. But when Darryl Zanuck told John about it, he thought it was a great idea. In any



## John Barrymore

case, John had worked before for Zanuck and thoroughly trusted his judgment. He was to play, once again, a crazy ham actor, who goes on a three-day drunk in the midst of the show. The theater kicks him out, and his wife leaves him. But all finishes happily.

Shall genius be destined to end its flight in such hugger-mugger? By no means. Proof of this was evidenced a few days before Barrymore left for the movie colony. He was requested to "do something" for the Four A's Ball. Several other big stars were to appear.

He consented in a half-hearted manner, but when it came to it, he complained of being too tired to change into his dinner jacket. However, after much coaxing, he left his penthouse facing the East River, properly attired, but still undecided as to whether he would perform or not.

The Grand Ballroom of the Waldorf-Astoria was packed when the Barrymores arrived. Famous people of the art world, the theater, and the movies were present. Some who saw John at the ball were surprised, because he had steadily refused all invitations, both public and private, since his return to the Great White Way.

When he stepped on the empty stage that Sunday night looking pale and tired, one noticed that his step was a bit shaky. Many thought that after all the rampant hysterics which followed the much-heralded Belasco opening, and the prostituting of his art, as it was called by many, that they

## Return to Broadway

were about to hear some questionable jokes, or perhaps a few spicy reminiscences. But when John commenced the famous "Rogue and Peasant Slave" soliloquy, and his voice rang out into that vast auditorium, there wasn't a movement in the crowd. Everyone was spellbound. Here, once again, was the unmatched Hamlet, the mighty actor, who could sway his audience to a profound rapture, whose magnificent eloquence could uplift the soul, woo it from its everyday surroundings.

When he had finished, the audience was dazed. Men who had seen many a great Hamlet stood deferentially silent. There were tears in the eyes of Dudley Digges, the veteran actor. It was as if a miracle had happened.

Since his return to Hollywood, many of John's admirers have lamented that he is not doing more dignified pictures. But in times like these, when there is so much sorrow and suffering throughout the world, any actor who can make audiences rock with laughter is doing his bit for humanity.

That his popularity is as great as ever has been proved by the overwhelming demand for him over the air, as well as in pictures. Nobody expects him to stick to the words of his script in radio, any more than he ever did on the stage, and he keeps those responsible for his program constantly on the *qui vive*.

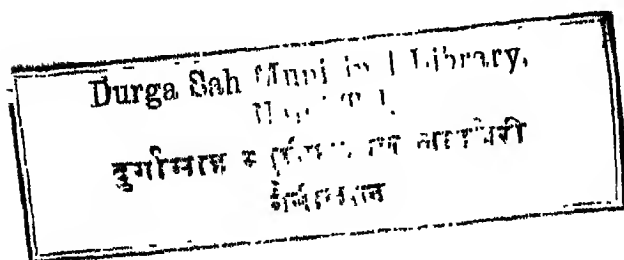
So enthusiastic is he that when he is playing a dramatic part he forgets his surroundings and begins to pace up and

## John Barrymore

down, while a microphone has to anticipate his every step. However, a confining rail has been built round him, so that while nobody knows what he will say next, they at least know where he is while he is broadcasting.

"For God's sake, don't whitewash me," was John Barrymore's only injunction to the writer of this book. "Play me as I am."

Nice little assignment, for he is, as we have seen, at least a score of men. One of them is, and will forever remain, the superb actor delivering the deathless words of the soliloquy. But another, quite as authentic, is the man we glimpsed at the beginning of this sketch—the gay, self-mocking figure in the vast, echoing house, from which all furnishings have been snatched away. There, with two cronies likewise capable of relishing the ironies and the diablerie of life, John Barrymore pauses for a good laugh and a quick look back, before moving on to his next part. What that role may be we cannot prophesy, except that it will be, as always, exactly what his artist's instinct and his sardonic, quicksilver spirit may choose to make it.



# CHRONOLOGY OF PLAYS IN WHICH MR. BARRY MORE HAS APPEARED

<i>Title</i>	<i>Part</i>	<i>Theatre</i>	<i>Date</i>
<i>Magda</i> .....	Max .....	Cleveland's Theatre, Chicago .....	October 31, 1903
<i>Glad of It</i> .....	Corley .....	Savoy, New York City .....	December 28, 1903
<i>Glad of It</i> .....	Polk .....	Savoy, New York City .....	January 1904
<i>The Dictator</i> .....	Charlie Hine .....	Criterion, New York City .....	April 4, 1904
<i>Yvette</i> .....	Signor Valreali .....	Knickerbocker, New York City .....	May 1904
<i>Sunday</i> .....	Jackey .....	Toured .....	1905
<i>Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire</i> .....	Stephen Rollo .....	Criterion, New York City .....	December 25, 1905
<i>Pantaloon</i> .....	Clown .....	Criterion, New York City .....	December 25, 1905
<i>Miss Civilization</i> .....	Brick Meakin .....	The Broadway, New York City .....	January 1906
<i>The Dictator</i> .....	—————*	Toured Australia with William Collier .....	May 1907
<i>The Boys of Company B</i> .....	Tony Allen .....	Lyceum, New York City .....	May 1907
<i>Toddles</i> .....	Lord Meadows .....	Toured .....	March 16, 1908
<i>A Stubborn Cinderella</i> .....	Mac .....	Savoy, New York City .....	January 25, 1909
<i>The Candy Shop</i> .....	Jack Sweet .....	Broadway, New York City .....	January 25, 1909
<i>The Fortune Hunter</i> .....	Nathaniel Duncan .....	Knickerbocker, New York City .....	May 1909
<i>Uncle Sam</i> .....	Robert Hudson .....	Gaiety, New York City .....	September 4, 1909
<i>Princess Zim Zim</i> .....	Pete .....	Toured Two Years .....	1910-1911
<i>A Slice of Life</i> .....	Mr. Hyphen-Brown .....	Reading, Pa. .....	August 28, 1911
<i>Half a Husband</i> .....	—————	Liberty, New York City .....	October 1911
		Toured .....	1911
		Empire, New York City .....	February 12, 1912
		Shubert, Rochester .....	1912
		Toured .....	.....

\*—— indicates that it was not possible to ascertain the part

# CHRONOLOGY OF PLAYS IN WHICH MR. BARRYMORE HAS APPEARED

(Continued)

Title	Part	Theatre	Date
<i>The Affairs of Anatol</i> . . . . .	Anatol	Little, New York City	October 1912
<i>A Thief for a Night</i> . . . . .	Robt. E. W. Pitt	McVicker's, Chicago	March 1913
<i>Believe Me, Xanthippe</i> . . . . .	George MacFarland	39th Street, New York City	August 1913
<i>Yellow Ticket</i> . . . . .	Julian Rolfe	Eltinge, New York City	January 1914
<i>Kick In</i> . . . . .	Chick Hewes	Longacre, New York City	October 1914
<i>Justice</i> . . . . .	William Falder	Candler, New York City	April 1916
<i>Peter Ibberton</i> . . . . .	Peter	Republic, New York City	April 1917
<i>Redemption</i> . . . . .	Fedor Vasilyevich Protosov	Plymouth, New York City	October 1918
<i>The Jest</i> . . . . .	Giannette Malespini	Plymouth, New York City	April 1919
<i>Richard III</i> . . . . .	Duke of Gloucester	Plymouth, New York City	March 1920
<i>Clair de Lune</i> . . . . .	Gwynplane	Empire, New York City	April 1921
<i>Hamlet</i> . . . . .	Hamlet	Sam H. Harris, New York City	November 1922
		Toured . . . . .	1923-1924
		Haymarket, London	February 1925
<i>My Dear Children</i> . . . . .	Allan Manville	McCarter, Princeton, N. J.	March 1939
		Toured Ten Months	
		Belasco, New York City	January 31, 1940

# CHRONOLOGY OF MOTION PICTURES IN WHICH MR. BARRYMORE HAS APPEARED

Title	Company	Date
<i>The Dictator</i> .....	Famous Players	.....1912
<i>An American Citizen</i> .....	Famous Players	.....January 1914
<i>Are You a Mason?</i> .....	Famous Players	.....January 1915
<i>Incorrigible Dekane</i> .....	Famous Players	.....August 1915
<i>Nearly a King</i> .....	Famous Players	.....February 1916
<i>The Lost Bridegroom</i> .....	Famous Players	.....March 1916
<i>The Man from Mexico</i> .....	Famous Players	.....July 1916
<i>The Red Widow</i> .....	Famous Players	.....October 1916
<i>Reffles, the Amateur Cracksman</i> .....	Famous Players	.....December 1917
<i>On the Quiet</i> .....	Famous Players	.....May 1918
<i>Hera Comes the Bride</i> .....	Paramount	.....January 1919
<i>The Test of Honor</i> .....	Paramount	.....April 1919
<i>Sherlock Holmes</i> .....	In England	.....1920
<i>Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde</i> .....	Famous Players	.....April 1920
<i>The Lotus Eater</i> .....	First National	.....December 1921
<i>Beau Brummell</i> .....	Warner Brothers	.....April 1924
<i>The Sea Beast</i> .....	Warner Brothers	.....January 1926
<i>Don Juan</i> .....	Warner Brothers	.....August 1926
<i>The Beloved Rogue</i> .....	United Artists	.....1927
<i>When a Man Loves</i> .....	Warner Brothers	.....February 1927
<i>General Crack (first talkie)</i> .....	Vitaphone	.....December 1929
<i>Eternal Love</i> .....	United Artists	.....1929
<i>Song of Songs</i> .....	Warner Brothers	.....1929
<i>The Man from Blankley's</i> .....	Vitaphone	.....April 1930
<i>Svengali</i> .....	Vitaphone	.....November 1930
<i>Moby Dick</i> .....	Warner Brothers	.....1930

# CHRONOLOGY OF MOTION PICTURES IN WHICH MR. BARRYMORE HAS APPEARED (Continued)

<i>Title</i>	<i>Company</i>	<i>Date</i>
<i>Arsène Lupin</i> .....	MGM	1931-1932
<i>The Mad Genius</i> .....	Warner Brothers	1932
<i>Bill of Divorcement</i> .....	RKO	1932
<i>Grand Hotel</i> .....	MGM	1932
<i>Rasputin and the Empress</i> .....	MGM	1932
<i>Reunion in Vienna</i> .....	MGM	1933
<i>Topaze</i> .....	RKO	1933
<i>Counsellor-at-Law</i> .....	Universal	1933
<i>Long Lost Father</i> .....	RKO	1933
<i>Dinner at Eight</i> .....	MGM	1933
<i>Night Flight</i> .....	MGM	1933
<i>Twentieth Century</i> .....	Columbia	1934
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> .....	MGM	1936
<i>Maytime</i> .....	MGM	1937
<i>True Confession</i> .....	Paramount	1937
<i>Bulldog Drummond Comes Back</i> .....	Paramount	1937
<i>Bulldog Drummond's Revenge</i> .....	Paramount	1938
<i>Bulldog Drummond's Peril</i> .....	Paramount	1938
<i>Romance in the Dark</i> .....	Paramount	1938
<i>Spawns of the North</i> .....	Paramount	1938
<i>Marie Antoinette</i> .....	MGM	1938
<i>Hold That Co-Ed</i> .....	Twentieth Century-Fox	1938
<i>The Great Man Votes</i> .....	RKO	1939
<i>Midnight</i> .....	Paramount	1939
<i>The Great Profile</i> .....	Twentieth Century-Fox	1940
<i>The Invisible Woman</i> .....	Paramount	1941

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